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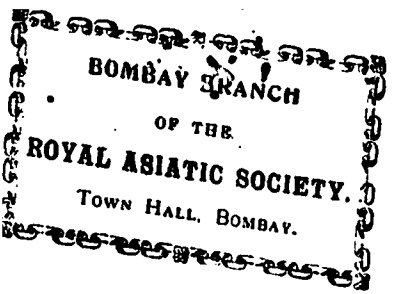

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THE

WORKS

OF

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VOLUME TWENTY-FIFTH.

GLASGOW:
WILLIAM COLLINS, S. FREDERICK ST.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

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LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

ROMANS.

BY

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Printed by William Collins & Co., Glasgow.

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LECTURES ON THE ROMANS.

LECTURE LXXVI.

ROMANS, x, 1.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

The words of this text derive a special and an augmented interest from the very position which it here occupies. You will observe that it is at the close of a very elaborate argument held by our apostle on the high topic of predestination; and from which the reader is fully warranted to imagine, that those Israelites, in whose behalf he plies Heaven with such fervent importunity, had already been the objects of Heaven's irrevocable decree. It is altogether worthy of notice, that, in this instance, the preordination of the Creator did not supersede the prayers of the creature; and that he who saw the farthest into the counsels of the Divinity above, saw nothing there which should affect either the diligence or the devotions of any humble worshipper below. We believe that there are some men with loftier reach of intellect than their fellows, who can discern the harmony between these two things; or how it is that the seat of the Eternal might be assailed with prayer, on a matter whereabout the

purposes of the Eternal have been unalterably fixed from the foundations of the world. They can perceive that either the prayer, or the performance of man, is but a step in that vast progression which connects his final destiny with the first purposes of God; and that, being as indispensable a step as any single link is to the continuity of the whole chain, it must be made sure else we shall never arrive at the right or prosperous termination. In other words, if man will not address himself to the business of supplication, the blessing of salvation will not follow; and, however indelible the characters may be in which the ultimate futurities of man are written in the book of heaven, this, it would appear, should not foreclose but rather stimulate both his prayers and his efforts upon earth. There be a few who can clearly discern the adjustments of this seeming difficulty; but for these, there are many, who, should they attempt to resolve, would sink under it as a mystery of all others the most hopeless and impracticable. To these we would say that they should quit the arduous speculation, and keep by the obvious duty—taking their lesson from Paul, who, though just alighted from the daring ascents which he had made among the past ordinations of the Godhead, forthwith busies himself among the plain and the present duties of the humble Christian; and so makes it palpable to the Church throughout all ages, that, however deep or hard to be understood his article of predestination may be, there is nothing in it which should hinder performance, there is nothing in it which should hinder prayer.

Theology has its steeps and its altitudes—pinnacles far out of sight, or shooting upwardly to heaven till lost in the cloudy envelopment which surrounds them. Yet this does not hinder that there should be a most distinct and discernible path which winds around its basement, and by which the lowliest of Zion's travellers may find an ascending way, that at length when the toils of his pilgrimage are ended, will land him in a place of purest transparency, where he shall know even as he is known. There are some whose vision can carry them more aloft among the heights of arduous speculation. Yet let none be discouraged—for there is a way of duty that may be practised and of doctrine that may be understood which is accessible to all—a way the entrance upon which requires but the union of a desirous heart with a doing hand—a union this that is often realized by the veriest babe in intellect; who, wholly unable though he be to scan the awful mysteries of a predestinating God, yet can lift the prayer both of affection and confidence, while looking to Him in the more legible as well as more lovely aspect of a God that waiteth to be gracious.

Our first remark then is that predestination should be no barrier in the way of prayer. Our second is, that unless the desire of the heart goes before it, it is no prayer at all. Prayer is the utterance of desire, and without desire is bereft of all its significancy. The virtue does not lie in the articulation—but altogether in the wish which precedes, or rather which prompts it. Prayer is an act of the soul; and the bodily organ is but the

instrument and not the agent of this service. The soul which thinks and wills and places its hopes or its affections on any given object—this and this alone is the agent in prayer. Insomuch that although not one word should have been framed by the lips, or emitted in language from the mouth—the man might substantially be praying. It is thus that he might pray without ceasing. In company, or in business, or in any scene whatever whether of duty or of discipline, there might at least be a prayerful heart apart from the formalities of prayer—a supplicatory, a kneeling attitude, on the part of his inner man, and to which he is bowed down continually by an aspiring earnestness on the one hand to be and to do at all times as he ought; and by a lowly sense on the other hand of his native insufficiency and dependence on a higher power than his own, for being constantly upholden in the way of rectitude. This will be sustained as prayer by Him who weigheth the secrets of the spirit; and, on the contrary, all expression disjoined from this will be dealt with as an affronting mockery of Heaven. It is true that in the case of prayer, God has committed Himself to the amplest promises of fulfilment; and all nature and providence would be at our command, if the mere verbality of a petition upon our part were to bring upon God the literal obligation of these promises. But He is not pledged to the accomplishment of any prayer where the desire of the heart does not originate the utterance of the mouth. The want of such desire nullifies the prayer; and to imagine otherwise would be to revive the superstition of other days—when

a religious service, instead of being held as a community of thought and spirit between the creature and the Creator, consisted in the mere handiwork of a certain and stated ceremonial. And be assured —that neither the counting of beads nor the conning of Pater-nosters is at all more irrational, than are those devotions, whether of the closet or the sanctuary, which the heart does not emanate, or the heart does not go along with.

This remark, obvious although it be, should be urged more especially on the coming round of every great religious anniversary. Although Popery in respect of denomination may have gone conclusively forth of our borders—yet in respect of spirit and character may it still abide in the land, and be as inveterately rooted as ever in the hearts of our population. Even long after that the creed of these realms has been purified of all that is erroneous in the dogmata of Roman Catholics, might the conscience be infected with a certain catholic imagination, which in truth forms by far the most misleading heresy of the Church of Rome. It consists in the charm which is ascribed to mere handiwork, to performance separate from principle, to that bodily exercise whereof the apostle saith that without godliness, which is a thing of soul and sentiment altogether, it profiteth little. Their delusion is that it profiteth much; and we fear it is a delusion which has left deep and enduring traces behind it, even among a people who have abjured the communion of Popery, and would treat its disciples with intolerance. Under all the disguises of our Protestantism, the inveteracy of the olden spirit breaks forth at sacra-

ments. And when we behold of many who breathe the element of irreligion through the year, how at the proclamation of this great religious festival they come forth in families—how, although on any other Sabbath the ordinary services of the house of God should be honoured with but half a congregation or with half an attendance, yet on the Sabbath and the service extraordinary, the place should teem to an overflow with worshippers—how an importance so visible should be given to this solemnity, and by those who have not habitually in their hearts any solemn reverence for the things or obligations of sacredness—We cannot but recognise somewhat like the dregs of our ancient superstition in this great periodical homage, founded as it often is on a sort of magical or mystic spell which is ascribed to sacraments.

Be assured of this and of every other ordinance of Christianity, that, unless impregnated with life and meaning, it is but a skeleton or framework—a body without a soul—a mere service of bone and muscle—which the hand can perform, but which the heart with all its high functions of thought and sensibility has no share in. It stands in the same relation of inferiority to genuine religion, that the drudgery of an animal does to the devotion of a seraph. This is not the service which God who is a Spirit requires of His worshippers—who, to worship Him acceptably, must do it in spirit and in truth. Religion is no doubt the homage of creatures who are immeasurably beneath the Sovereign whom they address; but still it is the homage of intelligent creatures—the homage of the subordi-

nate to the Supreme intelligence—of beings, therefore, who look with the eye of their mind towards Him who sits in presiding authority over the universe which He has made; and who at the same time are conscious, that they are looked upon with the eye of a Mind that discerns all and that judges all. In one word, if in the doing of any ordinance there be not the intercourse of mind with mind, there substantially is nothing; and yet we fear it to be just such a nothingness as is yielded by many who are regular in prayer, and who walk with decency and order through the rounds of a sacrament. In this wretched drivelling, both superstition and hypocrisy appear to be blended—a vain confidence in the efficacy of forms, and at the same time a willing substitution of them for the purer but more arduous services of a moral and spiritual obedience. It is this last alone which availeth. Your sacrament is vain, if the dedication of the whole life to God do not come after it. Your prayer is vain, if, unlike the apostle's in the text, the desire of the whole heart have not gone before it.

But let us now attend to the subject of the prayer—even that Israel might be saved. And here we may remark that although desire be a constituent part of prayer and therefore essential both to its reality and to its acceptance—yet it is not all desire thus lifted up from earth that will meet with acceptance in heaven. It were an attempt much too unwieldy at present, yet none more interesting, to specify what all the desires are of creatures here below which are sure of welcome and of a willing response in the sanctuary

above. It is not every random desire that will meet with such a reception—for the same scripture which holds out the promise of "ask and ye shall receive," has also held out the warning that many ask and receive not "because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts." Still, believing as we do, that Scripture does furnish the principles by which to discriminate the warrantable from the unwarrantable—and so, if I may thus speak, to classify the topics of prayer—we know not any exposition of greater practical importance, than what those things are which we may confidently seek at the hand of God even till we have obtained them; and what those other things on the seeking after which the Bible lays such discouragement, that we dare not or rather cannot though we would pray for them in faith, or pray for them in that which gives to every request its prevalence and its power. As an example of what now I can but briefly touch upon, it is written "that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us." This does not confer a sanction upon every suit or solicitation that we may press at the court of heaven, but certainly upon a vast number of them. Thus surely, every petition in that prayer which He himself hath dictated, even the Lord's prayer, may, as according most thoroughly with His own will, be preferred with utmost confidence on our part; and so it is that while we have no warrant to pray for this world's riches, we have a perfect warrant to pray for daily bread. The same principle of agreeableness to the will of God sustains our faith, when praying in behalf either of ourselves or others, for the riches of a

glorious immortality—being expressly told that God willeth such intercessions to be made for all men, and on this ground too that He willeth all men to be saved. Such is the large and liberal warrant that we have from God Himself for turning our desire into a request, when the object of that desire is salvation. No imagined desire on the part of God, or imagined destiny on the part of man, should lay an arrest on this plain exercise. Let there be but a desire in our heart after salvation, even as there was a desire in the heart of Paul for the salvation of his countrymen the Jews; and the patent way of arriving at our object is just to vent this desire in confident utterance before the mercy-seat of Heaven. So near does God bring salvation to us—So fully does He place it within the reach of all, and at the receiving of all. It is just as if we had it for the taking; or as if no obstacle whatever intervened between our sincere wish for it, and our secure possession of it. At least there seems, in that gracious economy under which we live, to be but one stepping-stone between them; and that is prayer. So very near and accessible to us has God made the blessedness of our eternity. He has positively committed His attribute of truth to the declaration, that if men will but ask He will bestow. He has invested, as it were, every honest petitioner with a power over his own future and everlasting destiny; and made the avenue so open between the earth we tread upon, and His own upper sanctuary, that if the bent or aspiration of our soul be towards heaven, heaven with all its glory and its happiness is our own. This at least is the object of a most legiti-

mate desire, and that prayer is a most legitimate one which proceedeth therefrom. Ask and ye shall receive, is a promise which embraces within the rightful scope of it, all that is good for the soul and for the soul's eternity. And so let us ask till we receive—let us seek till we find—let us knock till the door of salvation is opened to us.

But, thus to say that we may have salvation for the asking, certainly points out what may be called a very cheap way of obtaining it—cheaper far than we naturally or usually have any imagination of. For what may be easier it is thought than the utterance of a prayer—and even although desire should be indispensable to the success of it, we will not on that account lose our object in the present instance—for who is there that desireth not the salvation of his soul? Is there a human creature that breathes, who would not like to be assured of his exemption from the agonies of a hideous and intolerable hell, and who would not prefer to spend his eternity in the palaces of heaven? Put the question even to the most reckless and abandoned in all sorts of profligacy, would it not be his dread and his aversion to lie down amongst the everlasting burnings of the place of condemnation; and would it not be his choice rather, to be regaled throughout the unceasing ages of a glorious immortality, by those rivers of pleasure, and amid those sounds of jubilee, which cease not day nor night in the paradise of God? There is an instinctive horror of pain which belongs to all, and there is an instinctive love of enjoyment which equally belongs to all; and these, it may be thought, will guarantee a desire and an honest desire with every possessor

of a sentient nature for his salvation from the one, and for his secure inheritance of the other. So that if it be enough for the salvation of any that it should be his heart's desire and prayer to be saved —who after all wants the desire, and who is there that might not pray? This of all subjects, it may well be reckoned, should be one where the instigation of the heart is in unison with the utterance of the mouth; and thus while God wills the salvation of all, and man both wills and asks it, what obstacle can exist in the way of Heaven—or why should there be the distance of a single hairbreadth between any soul and the certainty of its salvation?

That you may apprehend aright how this matter stands, let me state to you the whole extent and import of the term salvation. We are aware of its common acceptation in the world—as if it signified but a deliverance from the penalty of sin. Whereas, additionally to this, it signifies deliverance from sin itself. He shall be called Jesus said the angel, for He shall save His people from their sins—save them from a great deal more let me assure you than the torment of sin's penalty, even from the tyranny of sin's power. The one salvation is spoken of when it is said of Jesus that He hath delivered us from the wrath which is to come. The other salvation is spoken of when it is said of Him, that He hath delivered us from the present evil world. The first secures for the sinner a change of place. The second secures for him a change of principle. By the one there is effected a translation of his person, from what is locally hell to what is locally heaven. By the other there is effected a translation of his heart and spirit,

from that which is the reigning character of hell to that which is the reigning character of heaven. The one is but a personal emancipation from the agonies of a tremendous suffering which is physical, to the joys of an exquisite gratification which is also physical. The other is a higher for it is a moral emancipation from the thraldom of sensuality and sin to the light and the love and the liberty of a now heaven-born sacredness. This last is an inseparable constituent of the gospel salvation—or rather I would say that it is the constituting essence of it. The other is more the accompaniment than the essence. The essential salvation surely is that which stands related to the moral economy of man, even his deliverance from sin unto holiness. The subordinate or the accessory salvation is that which stands related to his animal or sentient economy, even his deliverance from the fire and brimstone of hell to the music and the splendour and the sensible enjoyments and the everlasting security of heaven. The one takes place after death. The other takes place now. At least it has its commencement in time, though its perfect consummation is in eternity.

You will now understand what the legitimate desire is which should animate the heart when the mouth utters a prayer for salvation. There is the desire it is true for a future and everlasting happiness—but there is also desire for a present holiness. There is no other salvation held out to us in promise or in prospect throughout the New Testament. It is the only salvation which man has a warrant to ask; and it is the only salvation which God is willing to bestow. Nothing more true than that

if man really wills the thing which he prays for, and if the thing be agreeable to the will of God, he will certainly obtain it. Now God, on the one hand, willeth all men to be saved; and if any one of these men, on the other, will for his salvation, every barrier appears to be done away, and the sinner is on the eve of a great and glorious enlargement. But be sure that you understand what this will for salvation means. It is not merely that the hand of vengeance shall be lifted off from you. It is also that the spirit of glory and of virtue shall rest upon you. It is not merely that you shall obtain a personal exemption from that lake of living agony into which are thrown the outcasts of condemnation. It is also that you shall obtain a spiritual exemption from the vice and the voluptuousness and all the worldly affections which animate the passions and pursuits of the unregenerate upon earth. It is not alone for some vague and indefinite blessedness in future. It is for a renovation of taste and of character at present. The man in fact who desires aright and prays aright for the object of his salvation, is not merely on the eve of a great revolution in his prospects for eternity. He is on the eve of a great moral revolution in his heart and in his history at this moment. His prayer to be saved embraces it is true the transference of his person on the other side of death, from the torments of hell to the transports of paradise—but without a transference of character on this side of death the thing is impossible; and so there is enveloped in the prayer this cry of aspiring earnestness—"O God create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

LECTURE LXXVII.

ROMANS, x, 1.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

MAN on the one hand might like to be put into a state of happiness without holiness; but God on the other hand does not like that such a happiness shall be conferred upon him. Let a sinner pray with all fervency for his deliverance from hell and translation into heaven—he prays for that which is not agreeable to the will of God, if he desire not at the same time to be filled with heaven's charity and heaven's sacredness. Heaven we are told is that pure and holy place into which nought that is impure and nought that is unholy can enter; and the sinner who cries for salvation yet would keep by his impurities, is wasting the desirousness of his heart on an object that is impossible. It is most assuredly not God's will that heaven should be peopled with any but those, who, of the same family likeness with Himself, reflect His own image back again upon that throne which is irradiated with the lustre and the loveliness of all virtue. It is said that when He first willed the visible creation into existence, and looked over that terrestrial platform which His hand had garnished with so many beauties, He pronounced it to be all very good. Even for the grades of mute and unconscious materialism the Divinity may be said to

have a taste and an approbation; and in the tints and the forms of Nature's glorious panorama, its ocean and its landscapes and its skies, hath the Supreme Architect of our universe embodied His own primary conceptions of the fair and the exquisite and the noble. He delights in beauty, and is revolted by deformity even in the world of matter; and the far higher characteristics which obtain in the world of spirits, call forth proportionally higher and stronger affections in the breast of the Godhead. He loves the happiness of His creatures, but He loves their virtue more. And so from that moral landscape in paradise by which His own immediate presence is surrounded, all that offendeth shall be rooted out. There is nought of the sinful or the sordid that can be admitted there. The God who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity would not tolerate the sight of what is evil. Heaven is the place of His own especial residence; and He will fill and beautify it according to His own taste for the higher graces of the mind, to His own conceptions of spiritual worth and spiritual excellence. To suit Him, it must be a land of uprightness; and love must be the music which gladdens it; and the atmosphere which blows and circulates around its habitations must be one of ethereal purity. Himself will lay out and decorate the precincts of His own dwelling-place—nor will He suffer aught to settle there which can violate the moral harmony of such a scene, or mar the spectacle of its perfect and unspotted holiness.

Now remember that in praying to be saved, you just pray that such a heaven may be the place of

your settlement through all eternity. Else there is no significancy in your prayer. It is not enough that you seize by faith on a deed of justification. You must with diligence and effort and all the expedients of moral and spiritual culture, enter forthwith on a busy process of sanctification. It is well that Jesus Christ hath by the expiation of the cross, moved away that barrier which obstructed our access to the Jerusalem above. But, now that a way for the ransomed of the Lord is open, let us forget not that it is a way of holiness. There is a work of salvation going on in heaven, and by which Jesus Christ in some way that He hath not explained is there employed in preparing a place for us. "I go to prepare a place for you." But there is also a work of salvation going on in earth, and by which Jesus Christ through His word and Spirit is here employed in preparing us for the place. And our distinct business is to be ever practising and ever improving ourselves in the virtues of this preparation. It is not a selfish affection for happiness in the general which forms the leading principle of Christianity. It is a sacred affection for that happiness which lies in holiness—or rather for that holiness, which, to every being possessed of a moral nature, brings the best and the highest happiness in its train. In one word, if you take the right aim for salvation, it must be a moral heaven to which you aspire; and ere you can find entrance into such a heaven you must be moralised.

This desire for salvation then, if rightly understood, is desire for a present holiness. This longing after heaven at the last, is, with every honest

and intelligent disciple, a longing after the virtues now which flourish there. There will be an immediate entrance on heaven's uprightness and heaven's piety. So long as we are in this world, we have neither reached the hell or the heaven of eternity. We are only on the one or other of those paths which lead to them. Now to turn from the wrong to the right path, is just to turn from sin unto sacredness. And, in the very act of so turning, we receive strength for all the fatigues of that new journey which leadeth unto Zion. Turn unto me says God, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you. This influence from on high will be given to your efforts and your prayers. Your prayer for some abstract and indefinite beatitude in another state of being, is not a prayer which accords with the will of God; and can no more be listened to by Him or meet with acceptance, than any sordid or selfish petition for some luxury or splendour of this world which your heart is set upon. But when, instead of this, the prayer is for that beatitude which lies in holiness; when it is a prayer for the very beatitude of the good and the glorified spirits in heaven; when the desire for a joyful eternity above is thus consecrated by a desire for grace and godliness below; in one word, when, in place of a mere animal or selfish aspiration for the comfort, it becomes a moral and a sacred aspiration for the character of heaven, the prayer to a holy Creator from a creature desirous to be holy—then, in the answer of such a prayer, will the gospel make full vindication of that gracious economy which it announces to the world.

The pardon of his sins through the blood of Christ, is as free to him as are the light and air of heaven to the commoners of nature. The Spirit who gives him victory over his sins, and upholds him on his advancing way to all righteousness, is alike free to him—nor does there exist one obstacle in the way of his salvation, who is honestly intent to be as he ought and to do as he ought,

This argument is not wholly inapplicable at a sacramental season, which generally more than usual is a season of devotion. There comes now upon many a spirit a greater than its wonted desirousness about the things of eternity; and there is withal the imagination that what you are to do upon the morrow,[1] is somehow connected with the furtherance and the security of your everlasting interests. Now the impression which I want to leave upon you is, that your good in a future world can in no conceivable way be promoted by it, but in so far as it subserves your goodness in this world. The literalities of a sacramental observation will of themselves avail you nothing; and there is superstition, at once the most deceitful and degrading superstition, in the thought that your claim for heaven can at all be improved by an act of sacredness which leaves not one habit or one affection of sacredness behind it. This we particularly address to those who make due presentation of themselves on the communion Sabbath, and discharge themselves of all the punctualities of the communion table, and yet the whole year round cleave most tenaciously and with hearts full of secularity to the

[1] Preached on the day before a Sacrament.

dust of a perishable world—who in hand and in person intromit with all the forms of the ordinance, but catch not so much as one breath upon their spirits from the air of the upper sanctuary—or, if they do experience among the solemnities of a rare and remarkable occasion some transient inspiration, all is dissipated, and goes to nought, when they return to their homes and thence lapse again into all the earthliness of their unchanged natures. Be assured that the part you thus take in what may be called the mechanism of a sacrament, without any part in the mind which should animate and pervade it, will leave no other bearing on your immortal state than just to aggravate your condemnation; and therefore to escape the guilt which lies in this mockery of Heaven, and to turn the morrow's service into the real purposes of your salvation, let me entreat you to open your heart to the affecting realities which are couched in the symbols and skadowed forth as it were in the acts of the institution. The bread and the wine which are the memorials of your atonement should encourage even the guiltiest of you all to draw nigh in faith—for there is no guilt beyond the reach of that atonement. But remember that you also draw nigh with full purpose of heart after the new obedience of the gospel. Coming thus, you are warranted to sit down at the table of the sacrament; and the prayers of a heart desirous of a present holiness as of a future heaven, will most surely meet with acceptance, and as surely be answered with power. Your prayer to be saved from the punishment of sin, lifted while the emblems of the

Redeemer's sacrifice are before you, will most certainly prevail. Your prayer to be saved from the power of sin, lifted in the presence of Him who is Master of the assembly and to whom the dispensation of the Spirit has been committed, will as certainly prevail; and your joining in this ordinance will contribute to save, just in as far as it contributes to sanctify you.

But I have all along spoken as if this were a direct prayer for the object of one's own personal salvation. Whereas it is an intercessory prayer, and suggests what we ought to do for the salvation of those who are dear to us. Paul had made many a vain effort for the salvation of his countrymen. In every city where he found them, he began with the Jews ere he addressed the overtures of the gospel to the Gentiles. His obligation to them was the first obligation of which he acquitted himself. In the discharge of it he incurred many a hazard; and brought upon himself the hatred of those who had been formerly his friends; and made prodigious exertion in the way of travelling, and preaching, and doing all the labours of the apostolical office, in behalf of these his kinsmen according to the flesh; and not till compelled by the hostility of a whole nation either to flee from place to place, or turn him to the Gentiles, did he desist from the strenuousness of his efforts to secure the immortal well-being of those in his own family or in his own land. And even after every effort failed, still he had recourse to prayer. The desire of his heart was not extinguished by the disappointment he met with upon earth; but when baffled and thrown

back upon him there, it took an upward direction to heaven—when obstructed on all sides by the resistance of man, it ascended without obstruction to the throne of God. Even in the busiest period of his work and his warfare for the conversion of these obstinate Israelites, he mixed with his activities his prayers—but after that the activities were repressed, the prayers continued to arise. He was foreed to desist from the labours of the hand—but the love in his heart still abode unquenched and unquenchable; and when he could do no more, he prayed for them. This survived the longest and the last of all the other expedients; and long after he had found it was vain to labour, he did not think it was vain to pray.

This might serve as admonition to those whose hearts are set on the eternity of relatives or friends —to the mother who has watched and laboured for years that the good seed might have fixture in the hearts of her children, but does not find that this precious deposit has yet settled or had occupation there—to the sister whose gentle yet earnest remonstrances have been wholly unable to control a brother's waywardness—to that one member perhaps of a family whom the grace of the Spirit hath selected, and who now strives and supplicates in the midst of an alienated household, that all may be arrested in their way and turned unto God—to that holy and heaven-born disciple, whom the pollutions of the world have touched not; but who standing alone in a companionship of scorners, mourns over the profaneness and the profligacy that hitherto have marked all his solemn warnings, all

his friendly but ineffectual protestations. All these may, like other zealous missionaries, have had but a hard experience. They may have long been in contact and collision with the power of sin and unbelief in the hearts of others, and had much to discourage them. Their fidelity may have given offence—their affectionate counsels may have been spurned—their moral earnestness may have been laughed at—all their expedients to impress or to convince may have vanished into impotency—their very speech may at length become a signal for the attitude of suspicion and of prompt resistance on the part of their fellows—And so their every argument might only strengthen, might only confirm, the impenitency which it was meant to soften or do away. In these, and in many other ways, might they receive most palpable intimation that they are doing no good; and even perhaps but fixing more inveterately than before the distaste of children or of friends for God and godliness. And so might they be tempted to desist, even as the apostles desisted, from their countrymen. Yet let them never forget, that what has heretofore been impracticable to performance may not be impracticable to prayer. With man it may be impossible; but with God all things are possible. That cause which has so oft been defeated and is now hopeless on the field of exertion, may on the field of prayer and of faith be triumphant. Never cease then your supplications to the sanctuary above, for that power to turn the unregenerate and subdue them—which all your experience has told you does not reside unless it be given in the earthen vessels that are below. Let

those anxieties for the Christianity either of your household or of your acquaintanceship, which have hitherto been so unproductive of good—let them still continue to be unbosomed as before in the ear of your Father in heaven. He willeth intercessions to be made for all men, and He willeth all men to be saved. These declarations place you on firm and high vantage-ground in praying for human souls; and never, we may be well assured, never can any intercession be lifted with greater acceptance than that of a Christian parent, when he asks in behalf of those children who now gladden his home upon earth—that they shall be preserved and permitted to spend with Him their eternity in heaven.

It must not be disguised however, that this is a matter on which parents may delude themselves—that in their disinclination to spiritual things, and their indolence together, they may be glad to stand exonerated from the fatigues of performance, and take refuge in the formalities of prayer—that under the semblance of doing homage to the omnipotence of grace, they may omit the doing of those things which it is the office of grace to make effectual for the conversion of the human spirit—that in contemplating the part of the Holy Ghost as the agent, they may forget their own part as the instruments of this mighty operation: And therefore would we warn them lest they turn the orthodoxy of their creed, into a justification for the laxity and remissness of their conduct. That prayer never can avail which is not the prayer of honesty; and if is not the prayer of honesty, if, even though you pray to

the uttermost for the religion of others, you do not also perform to the uttermost. Could we only purge the prayers of men of all their hypocrisy, then should we behold the promises of the Bible nobly accredited by the verifications of experience; and the interchange of petitions and their responses between heaven and earth would demonstrate to the eye of observation, that there was indeed a living reality in the gospel. Even as it is, though we cannot just say that Christianity always runs in families, yet frequent enough are the instances of a transmitted faith and a transmitted holiness from parents unto children—to assure us that did the former but acquit themselves in all strenuousness and with all supplication, of their duty, the blessing of an efficiency from above would descend upon the souls of the latter; and manifold more than at present would be the examples of those who were born unto Christian parents being also born unto God.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

ROMANS, x, 2.

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

VER. 2. It is evident from this verse that the Israelites had one good quality while they wanted another. But the remarkable thing—I had almost said the strange thing of this verse—is, that the apostle should make their possession of this one good quality the reason of his prayer. 'It is my prayer that they might be saved—*for* I bear them record that they have a zeal of God.' They had zeal, but they wanted knowledge. One would think, that, if they wanted both, they would at least stand in greater need of his prayers; and the mystery is, how it comes about, that their having something of what is good should be the moving cause why Paul should be led to pray for their supreme good, even the everlasting salvation of their souls—a pretty plain intimation, that if they had not been in the possession at least of this something, if they had not had thus much of good, even zeal for God, he would not have prayed for them.

The only explanation I can give of this peculiarity, and it appears to me a very probable one, is this. You know that it is only the prayer of faith that availeth; and that in proportion as this faith is staggered or weakened in any manner, in that

proportion prayer loses of its efficacy. It is thus that you have not the same heart, the same encouragement, the same confidence, in praying for some great and palpable unlikelihood—as in praying for that which you either know to be agreeable to the will of God, or to be in harmony with the established processes of nature and of providence. It is thus that you could not pray so hopefully for the salvation of a thorough and confirmed reprobate, as for that of a man in whom you could perceive some lurking remainders of good—some aspirations towards a state of betterness—some symptoms or promises of a coming penitency or coming amendment. When all these are utterly extinguished, then faith is extinguished, and the tongue of prayer is either put to silence or paralysed. There is the despair of any reformation; and whosoever asks for that which he despairs of, let not that man think that he shall obtain it of the Lord. There is a dependence affirmed constantly in the New Testament between that faith wherewith a prayer ascends upwardly to heaven, and that fulfilment which comes in answer thereto downwardly upon earth; and whatever therefore shall tell adversely or favourably on the faith of supplicants below, must tell adversely or favourably on the fulfilments that are granted in the sanctuary above. And so it is just as if all chance of a man's salvation were done away, when all hope of it had died away from the hearts of those who should pray for it.

There is an observable harmony here between that process which takes place in the hearts of believers, and that process which takes place in the

counsels and acts of the upper sanctuary. You know that according to the usual methods of the divine administration, the Spirit is given in larger measure and larger manifestations to those who have duteously responded to His earlier intimations, or made right and faithful use of His first and feebler influences upon their hearts—whereas He is more and more withdrawn from those who quarrel or who resist these first impressions of His upon the conscience—so that at length He may take a final and irrecoverable departure away from their souls, and abandon to their own infatuation the unhappy men, who, growing every year in moral hardihood, live in the recklessness of all that is sacred, and die at the last in fatal impenitency. With this view of it you will be at no loss to understand the saying —that to him who hath, more shall be given; and from him who hath not, there shall be taken away even that which he hath. Paul himself, who served God with good conscience from his youth, though then in ignorance and in unbelief, had at length a full revelation given to him—whereas those of his countrymen who even against conscience maligned and resisted the Saviour, and so put away from them the things which belonged to their peace, were delivered up to that state of judicial blindness in which they were for ever hid from their eyes. The life of a Christian is made up of perpetual accessions of grace from one degree of it to another, till he arrives at perfection, and is ripe for glory. The life of an impenitent is made up of perpetual and successive extinctions of one good feeling, of one lingering sensibility after another, till he pass away

into utter darkness, and is ripe for the awful the irremediable destruction which follows it. There is a point somewhere in this dismal this descending pathway, where the irrecoverable step is taken, and he has sinned unto death. You will here be reminded of the apostle John, who bids us pray for those who have not sinned unto death; but who adds that "there is a sin unto death, and I do not say that he should pray for it." Now, as the last symptoms of any remaining good die away from the character of these reprobates, so the last sparks of a hope for their recovery die away from the hearts of by-standers who are looking on, and who at length cease to persuade and even cease to pray for them. Paul had not just sunk so low in despondency with regard to the Jews. He was not yet discouraged out of all faith and all prayer about them. He still observed one good point or property in the character of that nation—a zeal of God, even that very zeal which actuated himself when he breathed forth threatenings and slaughter against Christians—And so he still could hope, and still could pray for them.

From the materials of such an argument as this there may be constructed a powerful appeal, by which, if possible, to arrest the headlong way of that moral desperado, who, hastening on from one enormity to another, is fast losing all the delicacies of conscience, the truth and the tenderness of other days—in whose breast that light of the inner man which has been termed the candle of the Lord is fading away to its ultimate extinction; and whom the Spirit, tired and provoked by the stubborn

resistance of all His warning, is on the eve perhaps of abandoning, and that for ever, to his own heart's wickedness since he will have it so. Every year finds him a more confirmed alien from God, and stouter in all the purposes of rebellion than before. The disease of his soul grows and gathers in inveteracy—till, encrusted all over with that judicial hardness to which he has been delivered, all the touching demonstrations of Providence and all the loud artillery of menacing sermons play upon him in vain. Even when age and disease overtake him, even the alarum bell of his coming mortality might bring no terror to his ear; and with all his sensibilities lying prostrate under the power of that corruption which has withered them, he may be alike unappalled by the demonstrations of his guilt, and the fell denunciations of the vengeance which is due to it. The truth is that he is sunken, he is profoundly sunken in spiritual lethargy; and now beyond the possibility of recall, he affords the dire and the dreadful spectacle of a helpless a hopeless creature, whom the Spirit of God hath irrecoverably forsaken. Know then all ye regardless hearers who have entered and are now walking on a path of wilful iniquity, that this is the state to which you are descending. Your friends behold the progress of this impenitency. They sigh and they even supplicate Heaven on your account; but the time may speedily arrive, when the characteristics of your impiety shall look so indelible and so desperate, that to supplicate in faith is beyond them. And O, is it not time to retrace your footsteps on this way of destruction, unknowing as you are how

near or how soon you shall be on the verge of that condition when the Spirit of God shall cease to strive; and the very parents who gave you birth may weep, but cannot pray for you!

The Jewish character was not yet so utterly desolated of all worth and goodness, as to drive the apostle from hope's last refuge—even prayer. They wanted knowledge, but they had zeal; and this so far propped his spirit in that exercise, to the success of which a certain faith and a certain hopefulness are so indispensable. That must have been a valuable property, in virtue of which they could still be prayed for. But that on the other hand must have been a most important and essential property, from the want of which they eventually perished. Had they added knowledge to their zeal, they would still have remained the favourites of Heaven; and from the actual history of the Jewish people, we may learn what a serious want the want of knowledge is. That day of their tremendous visitation, in the prospect of which our Saviour shed tears over their devoted city, came upon them, to use His own language, just because they *knew* not the things which belonged to their peace. Their ruin as a nation was the effect of their ignorance; and in that fearful that overwhelming doom which our Saviour wept over, but would not recall, we have experimental proof of that alliance which obtains, by the ordinations of the gospel, between the knowledge of man and his salvation, on the one hand, and between the want of that knowledge, and his utter and irreversible wretchedness, upon the other. The judgment which went forth against

them because of their ignorance, had in it as much of the spirit and character of a vengeance, as if it had been inflicted on the worst moral perversities whereof humanity is capable. It is true that the awful extermination came upon them, because they had killed the Prince of life. But it was in the spirit of a blind zeal, and as Peter and John testify, through ignorance that they did it. Their condemnation still resolves itself into the want of knowledge—for had they known, Paul says, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Let us not then underrate the importance of knowledge in religion; nor, under the imagination that ignorance is not a responsible or not a punishable offence, hold that men might be in safety however defective in point of information, however wrong in point of mere understanding.

But in addition to the historical proofs, for what may be called the religious importance of knowledge, which might be drawn from the narratives of Scripture, there is abundance of still more direct proof in its merely doctrinal or didactic passages. On the one hand the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ is said to be eternal life. And on the other hand many are said to perish for lack of knowledge. When Christ shall come in flaming fire and amid the elements of dissolving nature, it is to take vengeance on those who know not God. Knowledge and ignorance in fact are dealt with, even as righteousness and sin are dealt with. They are dealt with morally, or as the proper subjects of a moral reckoning; and whereas under our existing economy the pleasures and preferments of a joyful

eternity in heaven come in train of the one, hell and destruction and all the penal consequences of guilt in most frightful aggravation are made to follow in the train of the other.

Now the question is, ought this in moral fairness to be? The equity of such a dispensation has been stoutly and openly denied. It has been asked if man be responsible for knowledge or understanding or belief, just as he is responsible for the dispositions of his heart or the doings of his hand. They can understand how man should be punished for his wrong behaviour. But they understand not how man should be punished for his wrong belief. The difficulty is to conceive on what ground the mere views of the understanding should properly be made the subjects of count or reckoning at all. Are the wrong views of the understanding to be resented or revenged upon, just as you would resent or revenge the wrong volitions of the will? You at once perceive the justice of retribution for the conduct. But you do not perceive the justice of retribution for the creed. You would never think of blame or of vengeance either for the height of a man's stature, or for the hue and the features of his countenance. And in like manner the opinions of the judgment are held by some to be equally exempted, as things of physical and organic necessity, from blame or from vengeance. Man is held by them to be responsible for his doings, which he can help; but not for his doctrines, which they say he cannot help —and so the God of Christianity has been charged with unrighteousness; and Christianity itself with this dread inscription upon its forehead that "He

who believeth not shall be damned"—has been indignantly exclaimed against as a hard and a most revolting dispensation.

Now we shall not enter on the consideration that the punishment consequent on the unbelief is not all for the unbelief, but for the guilt of a broken law, the condemnation of which takes its own proper and primary effect upon you, because you have not found your way to the place of refuge or of protection therefrom. This is very true—yet it is further true, that the guilt of a broken law is everywhere spoken of as enhanced and deepened to tenfold aggravation by the guilt of a rejected gospel. There is a wrath that abideth on unbelievers—even that wrath which their sins had excited in the bosom of the Deity, and which they have not escaped from by the way announced and intimated in the New Testament. But there is also a wrath added to the former, and augmented on the head of unbelievers, just because they have not betaken themselves to that way. In other words, there is a displeasure on the part of God towards unbelief, just as there is a displeasure towards any moral violation. The creed of the infidel is dealt with as his crime; and the question still remains, how comes it that the mere errors of the understanding should have the same sort of delinquency affixed to them, as the wilful errors either of the heart or of the conduct?

In reply to this interrogation, we fully admit that no man is punished for what he cannot help, but then we affirm that his belief in certain circumstances, (and we think that Christianity is in these circumstances) is that which he can help. We

admit that a moral delinquency should be charged on that which is not wilful—but we affirm that many are the occasions in which the belief or the unbelief is wilful; and that therefore, there might be no contravention of obvious justice in pronouncing the one to be a duty, and in proceeding against the other as you would against a crime. It is utterly a mistake to imagine that knowledge and opinion and belief, and in a word the various states of the understanding, are in no way dependent upon the will. It is by an act of the will that you set yourself to the acquisition of knowledge. It is by an act of the will at the first, and by a continued act of the will afterwards, that you first commence, and then continue a prolonged examination into the grounds of an opinion. It is at the bidding of the will, not that you believe without evidence, but that you investigate the evidence on which you might believe. In all these cases the will either gives its consent, or withholds it. It cannot create the light of evidence any more than it can create the light of nature. But it lies with it whether the evidence shall be attended to or regarded with the eye of the mind, even as it lies with it whether the illuminated landscape shall be looked upon or regarded with the eye of the body. It is in your power to shut or to avert the mental eye, just as it is in your power to shut or to avert the corporeal eye. It is in no way your fault, that you do not see when it is dark. But it is in every way your fault that you do not look when either the light of the natural heavens, or the light of Heaven's revelation is around you. It is thus

that the will has virtually to do with the ultimate belief, just because it has to do with the various steps of that process which goes before it. Where there is candour, which is a moral property, the due attention will be given; and the man will arrive at the state of being right intellectually, but just because he is right morally. When there is the opposite of candour—a thing pronounced upon by all as a moral unfairness—the due attention will be refused; and the man will be landed in the state of being wrong intellectually, but just because he is wrong morally.

You find a most impressive exemplification of this in the history of those very Jews whom we now are considering. During the whole of our Saviour's ministry upon earth, they were plied with evidences, which, if they had but attended to would have carried their belief in the validity of His claims and credentials as a Messenger from heaven. But the belief was painful to them; and at all hazards they resolved to bar the avenues of their minds against the admittance of it. This was the attitude, the wilful, the hardy, the resolved attitude in which they listened to all His addresses and looked upon all His miracles. That unwelcome doctrine which so humbled the pride, and did such violence to the bigotry of their nation, was not to be borne with—and, rather than harbour a thing so intolerably offensive, they shut their minds against all that truth which lay both in the words and in the works of the Son of God; and they shut their hearts against all that tenderness as well as truth which fell in softest accents from a Saviour's lips, or beamed

in mildness and mercy upon them from a Saviour's countenance. Who does not see that the will had a principal concern in all this opposition—that the pride and the passion and the interest and the ease, that these propensities of man's active and voluntary nature, had undoubted sway and operation in this warfare; that their love of darkness and their hatred of light affixed to their unbelief the stigma of a moral condemnation—their love of that which left a veil over their corruptions, their hatred of that which laid them open to the display and the disturbance of an exposure which they feared? It was on the strength of these moral perversities that they resisted and withstood the Saviour, and at length perished in the delusion which themselves had fostered. Theirs was not the darkness of men whom no light had visited, but it was the darkness of men who obstinately shut their eyes—who had lulled their own consciences asleep; and whom neither the voice of pitying friendship, nor the voice of loud and angry menace could again awaken. They were in this state when Christ wept over them, as He pronounced the doom of their approaching overthrow—a doom that fell upon them, not because of their mental delusion, but because this delusion was the fruit and the forthcoming of their moral depravity—not because they had minds that did not receive the truth, but because they had hearts that did not love and would not listen to it.

And this is for our admonition to whom the latter ends of the world have come. In this our day, the want of faith is still due, we believe, as heretofore, to the want of a thorough moral earnestness.

Did we only prevail upon you to seek after, to enquire as you ought, we have no doubt that you would come to believe as you ought. If blind, we fear that you are wilfully blind; and if short of that faith which is unto salvation, it is because you are not honestly and with all your heart in pursuit of salvation. You are not giving earnest heed to the witness upon earth, that is to the Bible, which is a light shining in a dark place; and which at last would manifest its own truth and divinity to the conscience of him who attentively regarded it. And you are not sending forth earnest prayer to the witness in heaven, that is to the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to pour the light of a convincing and an affecting demonstration over the pages of the written record. You are not doing what you might if you so willed—and if you do not see the light of that evidence which belongs to the truth as it is in Jesus, it is positively because you are not looking for it. In other words, if you die in mental darkness, it is because you live in moral unconcern; and whatever the damnation be which rests on unbelief it is altogether due unto yourselves. Often are you visited with the misgivings of a conscience which tells you that your present state is far from satisfactory; but these you contrive to stifle and suppress. The whole business of your souls is postponed and wilfully postponed from one day and from one year to another; and, abiding in darkness because you choose the darkness, you remain to the end of your lives in a voluntary destitution of that knowledge for the lack of which men perish everlastingly.

LECTURE LXXIX.

ROMANS x, 3—5.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doth those things shall live by them."

THERE should be no difficulty in fixing whether the term righteousness in this passage must be understood according to its personal or its legal sense—whether that righteousness which designates a character that is marked by its virtues and its graces, or that which is pronounced by a judge, or him who is entitled thereby to its honours and rewards. In this place, as in others, the context clears up the text. For example in Matthew, v, 20—the righteousness which is there spoken of cannot be mistaken for any other than the personal—that being made obvious by the illustrations which follow, and whence it appears that its superiority over the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees lies in the higher style of certain virtues which are there specified. And again in Galatians, iii, 21, there can be as little mistake, when we affix the legal or judicial meaning to the righteousness there spoken of—it being such a righteousness as could have given life, and which is viewed therefore not in the moral graces of which it is made up, but in the rewards, even those of a blissful eternity, which are

judicially conferred upon it—just as the ministration of death in 2 Cor. iii, 7, is clearly juridical, it being termed in ver. 9, the ministration of condemnation, for death is the penalty of sin: And so the ministration of righteousness contrasted therewith must be juridical also, it being the ministration of life, even that life which is the reward of righteousness. In like manner when one looks to the verse before us in conjunction with the verses which immediately succeed, there should be no difficulty in settling the judicial import of the term righteousness throughout this whole passage of the apostle's argument—as being, not the righteousness which has its place in the character or person of a disciple, but the righteousness which can be plea'd or stated by him at the bar of jurisprudence when he stands there as a claimant for the rewards and honours of eternity. In short it is the righteousness which gives a right to eternal life or which challenges eternal life as its due—that righteousness which the Jews fell short of, because they sought to establish it by the merit of their own doings, while they refused to make use of the plea which God offered to put into their hands as a righteousness that He would accept—this being a righteousness of which they were ignorant, or would not acknowledge, or would not submit themselves thereto. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness," or of that righteousness on the ground of which or consideration of which He would take man into acceptance; "and going about to establish a righteousness of their own," seeking to make good their title to heaven, as rightful claimants to its inheritance on

the strength or merit of their own proper services —"they would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God," but sought to be justified in their own way which was by their own works, rather than by His method of justification.

My only additional remark on this verse is, that, in the ignorance there spoken of, there is something more than the mere passive blindness of those who cannot help themselves because of the total darkness by which they are encompassed. It was very much the ignorance of those who would not open their eyes. There was an activity, a will in it, as much as there was in the other things ascribed to them in these words—in the 'going about' to establish a different righteousness from that which they would not acknowledge, or would not submit to—resisting it, in fact, because of their not liking it. This forms the true principle on which the condemnation of unbelief rests. "They love the darkness rather than the light;" and so the ignorance or unbelief is criminal—just as far as there were affection and choice in it. Even as the Gentiles "liked not to retain God in their knowledge"—even so the Jews liked not in this instance to admit God into their knowledge, or give entertainment in their minds to that way of salvation which He had devised for the recovery of a guilty world—even the transference of man's sins to the person of Christ, and the transference of Christ's righteousness to the persons of all who believe in Him. It is the part which the will has in it that makes ignorance the proper object of a vindictive retribution; and so when Christ cometh, He will take vengeance

on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ. The will has to do with the want of obedience; and so far as the want of knowledge is punishable, the will has to do with that want also. There is a wilful resistance to the light—though a resistance this it must be admitted which the light itself may overcome by the greater force of its evidence, by the greater brightness and intensity of its own manifestation—just as Paul's ignorance and unbelief were overpowered by the light that shone upon him near Damascus; and as the faith of converts in the present day, is carried, when God is pleased to reveal Christ in them, by commanding the light to shine out of darkness, or by calling them out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel.

Ver. 4. 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' There is one obvious sense in which Christ is the end of the law; and that is when the law viewed as a schoolmaster brings us to the conclusion, as to its last lesson, that Christ is our only refuge our only righteousness—thereby shutting us up unto the faith. But this is not the sort of end which is meant here. We should have a more precise understanding of the verse by taking the word end as equivalent to purpose—and that a purpose too which the law was fitted to serve not merely after it was broken; but at the time of its original institution, and when it was first set up for the moral government of men. Now that the law has been violated, and we are the outcasts of its rightful condemnation, it is good to be schooled by it into the lesson

that Christ is our only hiding-place, in whom there is no condemnation; and thus to make Christ the end or the final landing-place of that educational process through which we are conducted, when studying the high precepts and authority of the law, and our own immeasurable distance and deficiency therefrom. It is not thus however that this verse is to be understood; and for the right determination of what it signifies, we should go back to one of the purposes for which the law was given at the time of its first ordination—a purpose to be gained, not after the breaking of it, but which would have been gained by the keeping of it. One of these purposes was to secure the moral rightness of man's character and conduct. But another of these purposes was to secure for him a legal right to eternal life. The one was the end of the law for his personal holiness. The other was the end of the law for his judicial righteousness; and this is what we hold to be precisely the 'end of the law for righteousness' in our text. Its direct and primary object was that man should be justified by his obedience thereto; but man falling short of this object or end by falling short of perfect obedience, can only now obtain it in Christ, in whom alone we have righteousness, even a part and an interest in that everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in, by His obedience—which righteousness, with all its associated privileges and rewards, is unto all and upon all who believe. It is the merit of His obedience imputed unto us and made ours by faith, which forms our right or title-deed of entry into the kingdom of heaven. He is

the Lord our righteousness; and in receiving Him we receive that righteousness which it was the end of the law to have secured for us had it been by us fulfilled; but which we in vain seek by the law, now that it has been broken.[1]

Ver. 5. 'For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doth those things shall live by them.' One expedient by which men have attempted to dilute or do away the substance of the gospel, is to represent the insufficiency of the law for salvation as attaching only to the ceremonial law of Moses. In the passage now before us however, the righteousness which is of the law is said to be superseded by the righteousness which is of faith; and the former righteousness, or that which is laid aside, attaches to the law whereof Moses said that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. This surely must include the moral as well as the ceremonial. The great lawgiver of the Jews nowhere represents the doing of the things of the ceremonial law as enough for life. "Cursed is every one," he saith, "who continueth not in all the words of the book to do them." And so far is any sufficiency of this sort from being awarded to the ceremonial alone—there is many a prophetic remonstrance founded on the insignificance of the ceremonial, when compared with the worth and lasting obligation of the moral. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Put away the evil of your doings and learn to do well." It is not, if a man do the

[1] For a fuller elucidation of this verse, see our Sermon on Romans, x, 4, in vol. iii of our Congregational Sermons, being vol. x of the Series.

things of the ceremonial—it is if he do the things of the whole law, that he shall live. It is our sufficiency for the righteousness of the whole law which is here brought to the trial; and if found wanting, which eventually it will be in every instance, we must infer that man can no more attain to everlasting life by his most strenuous observation of moral righteousness, than by his most faithful and laborious discharge of the Mosaic ritual.

It is on the ground of the moral law and of it alone, that this trial for eternity now rests. We of the present day stand delivered from the obligations of the Jewish ritual, and of its burdensome services. Should we decline the gospel, we shall be dealt with purely and exclusively as the objects of the moral law; and still it holds true that the man who doeth these things shall reach everlasting life without a gospel and without a Saviour. If the law, the moral law, be sufficient to any man for this object—then to him the gospel is uncalled for. It is thus that the economy of grace may be brought to the trial of its worth and its importance; and to this very law the man who yields a perfect moral obedience may challenge for himself the right of neglecting its offers—the claim to an inheritance in heaven without the need of a passport from him who is represented to us as the Author of a great salvation.

The two ways to eternal life here brought into comparison are clearly and distinctly contrasted. The one is by doing—the other is by believing—The one by doing a full and finished righteousness for ourselves,—the other by believing that Christ has done a full and sufficient righteousness for us;

and makes each and all of us as welcome to its rewards as if they had been earned in our own person, by the merit of our own services. It is either in the one or other of these ways that heaven is at all accessible—so that should we both fall short of the first, and refuse to enter upon the second, we are hopelessly and helplessly barred from the paradise of God.

There are two places, as it were, at which these respective ways may be compared with each other—either at the entrance of them before we set out; or anywhere, after that we have set out, along the pathway of each—whether cheered on by the encouragements, or struggling with the difficulties peculiar to the one or the other of them.

I. Let us first take a view of the state of matters at the entrance of the two ways—when man, under the first effectual visitation of earnestness, resolves to go forth in busy search and prosecution after the good of his eternity. And here a consideration meets us at the very outset of the way of doing; and that is whether the condition of eternal life in that way be not already fallen from, and so the eternal life itself already forfeited. It is he who doeth all things that shall live. Have we hitherto done all things? Are we in circumstances now, for making a clear outset on this enterprise for heaven? It is not enough that there be the purpose of universal, of unreserved, obedience in all time coming. There must have been the performance of an obedience alike universal, alike unreserved, throughout all the stages of the history that is past. Can the memory and the conscience of

any man living depone to this? Can he lay his hand upon his heart, and say without misgiving—that throughout all the successive days of his past existence in the world, there has ascended to heavent he continuous incense of a pure and sinless offering? Has he altogether loved God as he ought? Has he altogether lived among his fellows as he ought? Has his hand done all that it might in the services of benevolence? Has his heart been filled as it should have been—if not with the sensibilities, at least with the purposes and the aspirations of piety? Has the will of the Creator, in no one instance, made place for his own waywardness? Has that law, every jot and tittle of which must be fulfilled, had this unfailing this unswerving this unexcepted fulfilment rendered to it by him? Can he appeal to every hour of his by-gone history; and confidently speak of each, having, without one flaw or scruple of deviation, been pervaded by that loyalty of principle, by that grateful recollection, by those duteous conformities of a heart ever glowing with affection and of a hand ever glowing with activity, which the creature owes to the Creator who gave him birth? These are questions which must be settled, ere he can advance one hopeful footstep on his way to heaven by the deeds of the law. Should there be one single deed either of sin or of deficiency to soil the retrospect of his past experience, it nullifies the enterprise. By a single act of disobedience the power of making good our eternity in this way is gone, and gone irretrievably. Heaven may still become ours by a deed of mercy. But that it should be ours by a judicial award of

law, and of law sitting in cognizance over our deserts and our doings, is a thing impossible.

If the conscience be at all enlightened, this will be felt as a difficulty which overhangs the entrance of the proposed journey to heaven in the way of obedience. The sense of a debt which no effort of ours can possibly lesson, and far less extinguish—the sense of a guilt that by ourselves is wholly inexpiable—the sense of an impassable gulf between us and God, seeing that when viewed as our Lawgiver and ere reparation for the injury of His outraged law shall have been made, His attributes of truth and justice and holiness unite to lay an interdict on any terms or treaty of reconciliation—these are what paralyse the movements of a conscious sinner; and just because they paralyse his hopes. The likest thing to it in human experience is, when a decreet of bankruptcy without a discharge has come forth on the man who has long struggled with his difficulties, and is now irrecoverably sunk under the weight of them. There is an effectual drag laid upon this man's activity. The hand of diligence is forthwith slackened when all the fruits of diligence are thus liable to be seized upon—and that by a rightful claim of such magnitude as no possible strenuousness can meet or satisfy. The processes of business come to a stand or are suspended—when others are standing by ready to devour the proceeds of business so soon as they are realised, or at least to divert them from the use of the unhappy man and the good of his family. The spirit of industry dies within him when he finds that he can neither make aught for himself, nor, from the enormous

mass of his obligations, make any sensible advances towards his liberation. In these circumstances he loses all heart and all hope for exertion of any sort; and either breaks forth into recklessness or is chilled into inactivity by despair. And it is precisely so in the case of a sinner towards God. If he feel as he ought, he feels as if the mountain of his iniquities had separated him from his Maker. There is the barrier of an unsettled controversy between them, which, do his uttermost, he cannot move away; and the strong though secret feeling of this is a chief ingredient in the lethargy of nature. There is a haunting jealousy of God which keeps us at a distance from Him. There is the same willing forgetfulness of Him, that there is of any other painful or disquieting object of contemplation. God, when viewed singly as the Lawgiver, is also viewed as the Judge who must condemn —as the rightful creditor whose payments or whose penalties are alike overwhelming. We are glad to make our escape from all this dread and discouragement into the sweet oblivion of Nature. The world becomes our hiding-place from the Deity —and in despair of making good our eternity by our works, we work but for the interests of time; and, because denizens of earth, we, estranged from the hopes of heaven, never once set forth in good earnest upon its preparations.

These are the impossibilities, which, at the very commencement, beset this way of making good your eternity by your doings; and from which there is no release to the spiritual bankrupt, till the gospel puts its discharge into his hands. By this gospel

there is a deed of amnesty made known, to which all are welcome. There is revealed to us a surety who hath taken the whole of our debt upon Himself—having fulfilled the ample acquittance of all our obligations, and so made us clear with God. Even to the worst and most worthless of sinners the offer of this great deliverance is made. It is our faith in the reality of this offer which constitutes our acceptance of it; and whereas in the way of doing, the very entrance was impracticably closed against us—this initial obstruction is entirely moved aside from the way of believing. In the language of the Psalmist, the bond is loosed; and restored to hope, we are restored to alacrity in the bidden services and preparations of eternity. With the conscience lightened, through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, of its guilts and of its fears—we are made to walk with the feeling, with the hopeful inspiration of men at liberty. The debt is cancelled; and we can start anew in that enterprise for heaven, on which but for the ransom of the New Testament, there lies a burden of utter impotency and despair. Like the emancipated debtor to whom the fruits of all his future toil and diligence are now fully assured to him, a weight is taken off from the activities of nature. Our labour is no longer in vain—because now it is labour in the Lord; and every effort becomes a step in advance towards heaven, when thus the old obedience of the law is exchanged for the new obedience of the gospel.

II. But we might imagine the conscience of man not to be enlightened at the outset of his religious earnestness; and that therefore, instead of the still-

ness of his despair under a sense of nature's insufficiency for the righteousness of the law, he actually sets forth in the pursuit of this righteousness, and makes the weary struggle it may be of months or of years in order to attain it. It is oftenest in this way that the first movements are made under the first powerful visitation of seriousness. The law in its unsullied purity—the law in its uncompromising rigour—the law in its unexcepted right of sovereignty over every desire of the heart and every deed of the history—These may not be adverted to at the time of the soul's incipient concern about these things; and so the attempt might fairly be made, to compass such an obedience as might found a claim or title to the rewards of eternity. In the prosecution of this object there may be the forth-putting of great strenuousness—the anxious feeling of great scrupulosity—the new habit, at least of toiling at the servilities, if not the new heart which had a taste for the sanctities of religion. At all events, many laborious drudgeries might be gone through. The regularities both of private and family prayer might be instituted. There might be alloted hours for the exercises of sacredness; and these in full tale and measure may be observed most rigidly. In short, a thousand punctualities may be rendered—and all with the view to establish a merit in the eye of heaven's Lawgiver, which never can be effectually done without a full and faultless adherence to Heaven's law. Now, we say, that if conscience feel as it ought, there will throughout this whole process be a festering, an inappeasable disquietude—a self-jealousy, and a

self-dissatisfaction which no doings or deserts of our own can terminate—a feeling of unworthiness which in spite of every effort will adhere to our best services, and turn all into hopelessness and vexation—For, let it be observed, that, reach what elevation of virtue we may, there will in proportion as we advance and we ascend, be further heights and distances in moral excellence beyond us and above us. The higher we proceed in this career, we shall command a farther view of the spaces which still lie before us; or, in other words, we shall be more filled with a sense of the magnitude of our own shortcomings. The conscience, in fact, grows in sensibility, just as the conduct is more the object of our strict and scrupulous regulation; and so, with every advance we make towards the perfection of the law, does the law appear to rise upon us with her exactions—and we feel as if more helplessly behind than at the outset of our enterprise. The presumptuous imagination of our sufficiency comes down when we thus bring it to the trial; and that impotency of which we were not aware at the outset, we are made to know and to feel experimentally. Meanwhile that is a sore drudgery in which we are implicated; and all the more fatiguing that it is so utterly fruitless—that the peace which we seek to realize by our obedience recedes at every step to a greater distance, because new heights of obedience are ever rising on the view, and baffling every effort to substantiate a valid plea for the rewards of immortality. This is that law-work, of whose aspirations and toils and frantic unavailing struggles, like those of a captive to break loose

from his prison-hold or to scale the precipice which hems him, we read in the affecting history of so many a convert—whose awakened conscience only spoke to him in louder terms of reproach the more he did to appease its endless upbraidings, and whose every attempt to flee from the coming wrath made it glow the more fiercely upon his imagination. Not ten thousand punctualities of the outer conduct can purify a heart that is every day obtaining some fresh revelation of its own worthlessness, and which when brought to the touchstone of a spiritual law finds itself destitute of all right affection or affinity towards God. This is the grand failure. His hand can labour; but his heart cannot love—And after wasting and wearying himself in vain with the operose drudgeries of a manifold observation, he still finds that he is a helpless defaulter from the first and the greatest commandment.

Now, it is when thus harassed and beset among the impracticable obstructions which lie in the way of doing, that he finds the very outlet he stands in need of when the way of believing is opened to him. The righteousness, which he has so ineffectually tried to make out in his own person, has been already made out for him by another; and now lies for his acceptance, as a simple and unconditional offer which he is invited to lay hold of. The sin, which hitherto has so hardened him with despondency and remorse, is now washed away by the blood of a satisfying expiation; and God in the gospel of Jesus Christ calls upon him to draw nigh, with the erect, the joyful confidence of one who never had offended. The Saviour has completely done for

him, what with so much of strenuousness but with so little of success he has been trying to do for himself; and he is warranted to step immediately into the hopes and the happiness of one, not merely reconciled to God, but vested with the same right to His favour, as if he had earned it by the worth of his own services, by the merit of his own full and faultless obedience. What a mighty enlargement when the title-deed to heaven, for which he had been stretching forward with many long and laborious efforts, till he at last sunk down into exhaustion and despair, is put into his hand; and the gifted creature, now set loose from bondage and terror, exchanges the services of constraint for the willing services of a grateful and affectionate loyalty!

It is thus that the guiltiest of sinners, simply on believing the testimony which God hath given of His Son, is instated, and that immediately, in all the titles and privileges of a pure and perfect righteousness before the Lawgiver whom he has offended. He passes from death unto life. Individually he is freed from the penalties of sin, and judicially he is vested with an absolute right to the rewards of a full and finished obedience. The righteousness of Christ is reckoned to him, and he is dealt with accordingly. No wonder that the tidings of a salvation so marvellous should be so generally met by the incredulity of nature, opposed as it is to all the expectations and all the tendencies of nature, which, when awake to the concerns of another world at all, is ever prompting man to make good his own way to a blissful eternity, and that by a righteousness of his own. It is when delivered from the burden

of this felt impossibility, that man breaks forth on a scene of enlargement; when in the secure possession of a right to heaven in the righteousness of his accepted surety, with all the alacrity of an emancipated creature whose bonds have been loosed, he proceeds to offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and to call on the name of the Lord.

And let us not be afraid lest this judicial salvation, if it may be thus termed—so full, so free, so competent to every sinner, however vile, if he but place his confident and unembarrassed reliance on it, so ready, nay so importunate for the acceptance of all, and that without the least distrust or delay on their part—let us not be afraid, lest this judicial salvation should not bring a moral salvation in its train, as if exemption from the penal consequences of sin were not to be followed up by exemption from the power wherewith, anterior to our reception of the gospel, it lorded over us. The great author of that economy under which we live will not leave any of its parts or any of its provisions unfulfilled upon us. He will sanctify as well as justify; and if we but trust in Christ, we shall be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who will superadd the personal to the judicial righteousness, and make us meet in character as well as meet in law for that heaven, the door whereof Christ hath opened to us —for the service of that glorious inheritance which He hath purchased by His obedience, and is the fruit of the everlasting righteousness which Himself hath brought in.

LECTURE LXXX.

ROMANS, x. 6–9.

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

This passage in the Epistle to the Romans is taken from a similar one in the book of Deuteronomy; and it has been made a question, whether it be strictly a quotation in the sense of its being applied by the two writers to one and the same subject, or if it be used only by Paul in the way of accommodation, and applied differently because related to an essentially different covenant from that which is spoken of by Moses. For the covenants being the same, it is argued that the words of the text as they occur in the Old Testament were not uttered on the occasion of that covenant which was made with the children of Israel at the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai, but years afterwards, and on the eve of their entrance into the land of Canaan—when the address containing the sentences from which our text is taken was delivered by Moses, and with the following prefatory announcement—"These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with

the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb."[1] And certain it is, that in this latter covenant there are evangelical privileges held forth, and evangelical promises, which enter not into the description of that righteousness which is of the law, "That the man which doeth these things shall live by them." For we therein read of forgiveness to the penitent, "When thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God, he will have compassion upon thee"[2]—and of regeneration, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul"[3]—and not only of forgiveness, but of positive beneficence and favour, "For the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good."[4] These perhaps may identify this latter of the Old Testament covenants with the covenant of peace and mercy under which we now live, and so identify the application of the words both as uttered by the Jewish legislator and by the Christian apostle to one and the same subject, even the gospel of Jesus Christ—leaving the distinction which there is in the righteousness of the law from the righteousness of faith to be exemplified and upholden by the earlier of these Hebrew covenants, even the covenant of Horeb—under which we have this promise of hopeless fulfilment, that the man who doeth these things shall live by them; and this denunciation of terror and despair, universal because inclusive of the whole human race—"Cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of this law to do them."

[1] Deut. xxix, 1.
[2] Deut. xxx, 2, 3.
[3] Deut. xxx, 6.
[4] Deut. xxx, 9.

But we must not spend further time in the settlement of this question. Whether the words of our text were employed both by Moses and Paul to characterise the same or two different economies, there is a common property ascribed by each to that one economy of which he is speaking. The condition upon which its blessings are suspended, and by the fulfilment of which these blessings will be realised, is not a distant and inaccessible secret —either imbedded in the fathomless depths below, or placed far out of sight among the unscaled heights of the firmament above us. "For this commandment," it is said by the founder of the old dispensation, "the commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off." "But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."[1] And, in counterpart to this, it is said by the chief among the apostles in the new dispensation, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; That if thou believe, thou shalt be saved."

But the great peculiarity in the verses of my text, and to which I would at present direct your more special attention, is the precise and particular object of the ascent and the descent respectively which are there spoken of by the apostle. These objects are different from that which is spoken of in the book of Deuteronomy—where to bring the commandment or the word from afar, is the assigned purpose both of the imagined ascent into heaven,

[1] Deut. xxx, 11, 14.

and of the imagined descent into the abyss or bottom of the sea. In the New Testament this is stated differently—the assigned purpose of the ascent being 'to bring Christ down from above,' and of the descent being 'to bring up Christ again from the dead.' It is still possible, notwithstanding this difference—that Moses and Paul may after all have been dealing with the same truth, and looking to the same quarter of contemplation—the first, as is customary in the Old Testament, giving utterance to a doctrine, but couched in enigma or shrouded in hazy obscuration; the second, as is customary in the New Testament, giving utterance to the identically same doctrine, but evolved from the dimness in which it lay hidden, and with the light of a clearer and broader manifestation thrown over it. However this may be, let us now hasten to our explanation of the verses here before us; and which we think fitted to throw a new and interesting light, over the gracious economy that has been instituted for the salvation of our world.

In the parallel verses of Deuteronomy there seems no difficulty. The children of Israel are there simply told—that, instead of having to seek afar or among remote and impracticable places for the rule of life, this rule brought from heaven to their door, now stood within reach of one and all of them. The same could have been said of a law anterior to that of Moses, even the law of the heart—that voice within the breast, which is heard in the homestead of every human conscience; and gives forth lessons that serve, in part at least, for the guidance of all men. And the law of Moses,

though brought from the heights of the upper sanctuary, might be said, as far at least as viewed in the generalities of its ethical system, to have placed itself in the hearts of those who heard it—responded to in all its great unchangeable principles by the light and the law of every man's conscience—thus finding a voucher, as it were, for its own truth and authority in every bosom—and in virtue of this its ready introduction to the innermost recesses of our moral nature, of the prompt and familiar recognition which it meets with there, so establishing and so accrediting itself as the rightful inmate of humanity all the world over, as both to warrant and explain the saying, that this word framed though it was in the highest heavens, and thence brought down to the earth we live in, still this word is in thy heart. And then as to the ritual and the positive of this great religious directory, though it could awake no consenting testimony from within, and could therefore meet with no internal evidence to welcome or to own it—yet enforced as it was by every demonstration of authority from without, by the smoke and the thunder, nay by the voice and all those signals of a present Deity, which convinced and overawed the thousands of Israel—we may well believe that the book written by Moses, and which recorded all the precepts whether ceremonial or judicial or moral, that were delivered to this great prophet in the converse which he held with God, and which also described all the usages and forms of their earthly service, conformably to the pattern showed him in the mount, by which were represented the ministrations of the

upper sanctuary, or things of the tabernacle in the heavens—that this book in all its contents, would be deferred to by the Hebrews of old, as the rightful and authoritative directory both of their solemn worship, and of their every-day conduct: And being read at stated seasons by the priests to the people, as well as read by parents to those children whom they were strictly charged to teach diligently in the statutes of the Lord, it might well be said of this word that it was in their mouth as well as in their heart. They had not to go abroad, as sages of old are said to have done, when they travelled in quest of wisdom. They had neither to search for it as for hid treasure in the depths of the earth, nor to pluck the secret from unseen or mysterious altitudes beyond the sky. It had been brought down from thence to Sinai; and imparted to Moses; and placed by him in a volume of little room within the reach and reading of every man; and so, passing into the hearts and homes of all the people, the word of life was thus made nigh unto them.

But the law has not given life—neither that law of the heart which is of universal obligation, its voice having been heard all the world over; nor that law of a written revelation proclaimed in the hearing of a special nation, to whom were committed the oracles of God. Be it the one or the other law, there is not a man who liveth on the face of the earth who has not fallen short of its righteousness. It has proved the ministration of a universal death—and that because of a universal disobedience. It is not that the law fell short; but that man, the subject of the law, fell short. The rule

of righteousness as given to him at the first was perfect. It is because of defects and deviations from that rule, that ruin, a universal ruin, has come upon our species; and another righteousness had to be devised, on the basis of which man might recover the blessings which he had forfeited, and be reinstated in that favour with God from which he had fallen. Such is the design of the gospel, or of that righteousness of faith which the gospel has made known to us; and our enquiry now is into the nature of that common property which has been claimed for this last as well as for a former revelation—insomuch that Paul could reiterate what Moses had substantially said before him—"But the righteousness which is of faith speaking on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

For our better understanding of these remarkable verses, and more especially of the two parentheses which are peculiar to this passage, there being no trace of them in the parallel passage of the older scriptures—let me state, in a few words, what may be termed the two great steps or stages of that redeeming process, by which man has been restored to that place of relationship with God

which he now occupies. Man by transgression had done dishonour to the law of God; and we may learn or estimate the magnitude of the outrage, from the magnitude of the steps which were taken for repairing it—even that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, had to descend from heaven; had to put on the shroud of humanity; had, during the whole period of a sinless yet suffering life, to sustain a mysterious conflict with the temptations and infirmities of our nature; and, finally, had to take upon Himself the whole burden of the penal infliction to have been otherwise discharged on a rebellious world, by bowing down His head unto the sacrifice: And thus, as the fruit or final object of His descending movement, was He delivered for our offences. But this is not the whole amount of the boon He has achieved for us. There is something a great deal more than the cancelment of our debt, or blotting out of the sentence that was against us in the book of condemnation. He not only suffered, but He served. He not only absorbed for us the penalty of a wretched and undone, but He earned for us the reward of a blissful eternity. He who, to use the language of Daniel, "made an end of sins," also did more, "He brought in an everlasting righteousness." In other words, He not only worked out our legal release from the torments of a hideous and everlasting hell, He made good our rightful inheritance among the triumphs and the felicities of heaven—not only annulling but reversing our condition from that of the outcasts of a hopeless condemnation, the children of a wrath that was to come, to that of the expectants

and the heirs of a coming glory. We are not able to discriminate among the various passages of His history, between the endurance by which He bore the chastisement of our peace, and the obedience by which He won for us the prize of immortality. But there is a real and substantive distinction between these two services—a distinction recognised in Scripture—between the pardon by which we cease to be reckoned with as sinners, and the justification by which we are reckoned and dealt with as positively righteous. And as the event of His death is clearly set forth as related to the one, that death being an atonement for sin—so the event of His resurrection, or rather of His readmission into paradise, though not so frequently yet is clearly set forth as related to the other, that exaltation being conferred on Him as the reward of His obedience, by which He opened the door of heaven both for Himself and for His followers. It is thus that He who is said to have reconciled us by His death, is also said by His life to have consummated our salvation. And thus if, as we have already said, the fruit or final object of His descending movement was His being delivered for our offences—so the fruit or final object of His ascending movement is His being raised again for our justification.

There are other passages in Scripture which intimate the same relation that we have now stated—between, on the one hand, the death and resurrection of our Saviour; and, on the other, the two distinct points of that salvation, (removal of the penalty and a right by service to the positive reward) which He hath achieved for us and by which

He hath completed our title-deed to an entry and a purchased possession in the paradise of God. But that I may come at once to the lesson of our text, I would only now bid you think of these two great movements, from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, and of the illustrious Person who had to make them—ere the high demands of the divine jurisprudence could be fulfilled, or a way of access be again opened for guilty man to the Lawgiver whom he had offended. It was a question in the policy of Heaven which angels desired to look into; and the highest wisdom as well as highest strength of these upper regions had to be put forth for its settlement. For this, the Eternal Son had, from amid the wondering hosts of the celestial, to leave the bosom of His Father; and He, whose forthgoings were of old, even from everlasting, and to veil all His primeval glories in an earthly tabernacle; and, when God manifest in the flesh, did He partake to the full in the infirmities of our assumed and associated nature; and beyond the ken of mortal eye, were their sufferings unknown of which we read a few mysterious outbreakings in the agonies of the garden; and unknown struggles too in still deeper passages of His history, as when He engaged in conflict with the forces of darkness, and spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly. And after a death of deep and dreadful endurance, an equivalent sacrifice for the guilt of a world: and a descent into the lower parts of the earth, the purpose whereof from the imperfect glimpses which revelation gives of it, is to us an unsolved enigma—did the once crucified, retrace

His way to the position and pre-eminence which He at present occupies of the now exalted Saviour —First by the reanimation of His body, then by His resurrection from the grave, then by His sublime ascension above the world, where He slowly withdrew from the gaze of chosen witnesses; and last of all by His entrance into heaven, and the assumption of His Meditorial place at the right hand of the Father—and that, we may well believe, amid the hosannas of an angelic host, who, in numbers without number, welcomed and did Him homage as the Author and the Finisher of a mighty enterprise —Even the enterprise by which He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in the merit and investiture of which, the guiltiest sinners of our fallen, our dishonoured species, may, without disparagement either to the law or to the Lawgiver, stand with acceptance before the throne of God. We ask you to ponder on these things. Slighted, disregarded, scarcely recognised at all in the hazy atmosphere of earth—we ask you to think of the movement and the stir, if I may so express myself, which they made in heaven, and of the lofty estimation in which they are held by the intelligences there. Above all, keep a fast and firm hold of this consideration. To reinstate our fallen world, the Son of God had first to descend and die for sin; and then to ascend even to the place which He now occupies—where, as the fruit of the travail of His soul, He completes and effectuates our salvation.

With this fully in your mind, we are in a fit condition both for your understanding and for our enforcement of the lessons in the text. And first, as

a lesson of rebuke to those of whom we read in the preceding context, who, refusing to take up with this righteousness of God, vainly and presumptuously sought to establish a righteousness of their own. Other foundation, the Bible tells us, than that which is laid already, can no man lay; but they, unchecked and unhumbled by any sense of their own utter impotency, labour with all their might to construct and lay over again a foundation of merit and of dependence for themselves. In other words, they would usurp the office of the Saviour; or, as if that office had been imperfectly fulfilled, and left unfinished, they would lay aside His work and substitute their own work in its place —in the proud imagination that their own strength was commensurate to the mighty enterprise, that enterprise of toil and conflict and suffering and at length of triumph which brought Christ down from heaven, and brought Him up again from the deep and secret places of the earth. In despite of this great achievement, their constant inclination is for another basis of acceptance on which to lean than that which Christ hath so laboriously reared; or, as if to supersede and set at nought the plea of His righteousness—which alone is adequate to the dignity of Heaven's jurisprudence—would they thrust forward their own puny and polluted righteousness as being good enough for God. You may now understand the principle on which this self-dependence of man becomes so high an offence in the sight of Heaven. It implies the disparagement and the mockery of all that has been already done for the world's salvation. We read of Christ as the Cap-

tain of this salvation—and that He trode the wine-press alone—and that of the people there were none with Him. Say not then in thy heart, that thou canst make atonement or amends for thine own disobedience—a work so arduous, as to have brought down Christ from heaven for the achievement of it. And say not in thine heart that thou canst substantiate a right by thine own services to the rewards of immortality—a work of Christ's also, and for the victorious fulfilment of which He was brought up from the dead, and highly exalted to a place of advocacy and intercession at God's right hand, where even within the precincts of that august sanctuary of which justice and judgment are the habitation, He, on the single strength of His own righteousness, can make good the claims of all who believe on Him. To turn from such a salvation as this, and labour for the achievement of it with one's own arm, is indeed to stumble at a stumbling-block. It is affronting to God. It is ruinous to man.

But this is not all. There is in this passage not only a lesson of rebuke to the proud—but the far kindlier and more congenial lesson, and the one we are most anxious to impress, a lesson of highest encouragement to the humble. For it is not always pride that actuates a man, when seeking to establish a right to heaven by his own righteousness. Apart from this, there is the natural legality of the human heart—a most natural imagination, and upheld by a thousand analogies in the transactions of man with man, that obedience is the work and heaven is the wages—the one the purchase-money, the other the purchase—related to each

other like the counterpart terms of any contract or bargain in the numerous exchanges of human society. It is not always in the spirit of pride that the aspirant after salvation falls in with this conception and acts upon it. He simply thinks it the direct way of going to work, that he should try to earn God's favour by deserving it; and accordingly he labours to be right, and to be even with the law, and to bring up his conduct to the level, or rather to the high standard of its acquirements. But in very proportion to his sincerity, and if his conscience be at all enlightened, the more he labours the more is he oppressed and borne down by a helpless sense of deficiency—heavy-laden under the weight of his past delinquencies, and wearied by efforts alike fruitless and fatiguing to recover his unmeasurable distance from God's lofty commandment. It is when thus toiling in pursuit of impossibilities, that the true understanding of these verses, as if by the letting in of light into his mind, dissipates every cloud, and at once releases him from his anxieties and fears. Let him only learn that the identical enterprise at which he now labours as in the very fire, the only-begotten, the Son of the everlasting Father, Himself the Mighty God and Prince of Peace, hath already put His hand to; and left not off till, in the triumph of its full consummation, He called out that it was finished. He first had to descend from heaven, that He might become sin for us, and in our nature bear the punishment that we should have borne; and then did ascend into heaven, having by His obedience unto death, completed the titles of entry

and inheritance there both for Himself and for all His followers—and so that, in the merit and acceptance of His high service, we might become the righteousness of God. Let the weary and the heavy-laden sinner but submit to this righteousness and be at rest—nor seek to establish for himself, that which cost the incarnation of our crucified, and has been rewarded by the exaltation of our risen Saviour. And thus would we explain these parenthetic clauses. Strength to do the thing implies a strength to wield the alone instrument that was adequate for the doing of it. I can no more make atonement for my own guilt, than I could have ascended into heaven, and there brought down Christ from above who has poured out His soul unto the death for me. I can no more earn or establish my own right to the high rewards of eternity, than I could have descended into the deep, and there brought up Christ again from the dead, who, in virtue of that everlasting righteousness which Himself alone hath fulfilled, was raised to the Mediatorial throne which He now occupies, and from which He welcomes the approaches of all and casts out none who come unto Him. Let me say not in my heart then, that there is a strength in me commensurate to the work which called for either the one or the other of these movements; but dismissing the vain imagination, let me forthwith rejoice that it is a work no longer to do, because already done—that it is a work which has already passed through such able hands, even of Him who travailed in the greatness of His strength for the full and finished performance of it—that a

ready-made righteousness is now looking down upon me from heaven, made to my hand, and which I am simply invited to lay hold of—that personally and practically, my concern now is not with the doing, but with the report of the doing—not with a work which is far above my reach, but with a word, which is nigh unto me, and in which with the felt helplessness and docility of a little child, my only part is to acquiesce—a word now standing at the door, and soliciting admittance from every one of us; and which, when once it finds entrance into the home of a believer's heart, makes good his interest in the whole of this wondrous salvation.

The question and the remonstrance now held with the men of our fallen race is not, Who of you hath made good the righteousness of the law; but "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

We can at present expatiate no further on this high topic; but will conclude with a brief reply to one question which may have been suggested in the course of these explanations. If salvation, it may be asked, is brought so nigh and made so free to us, might not all exertion on our part cease? or if the righteousness of Christ be thus made to supersede the righteousness of man, then under such an economy as this, what place for human virtue is to be found? We answer that all exertion for the object of establishing a valid and challengeable right, or of making good a judicial claim, or claim in law to the kingdom of heaven, ought to cease; and that because human virtue has no place in the title deed, or forms no part of the price and purchase

money by which that glorious inheritance has been earned for us. But if to be meet in law is indispensable for our entry into paradise, to be meet in character is alike indispensable; and though for the former, or the legal meetness, human virtue is of no possible avail, for the latter, or the personal meetness, human virtue is all in all. The truth is, that the doctrine of our justification, our forensic justification by faith, so far from acting as a drag or discouragement on the virtue of man, sets him at large, as if by the removal of an incubus, for the busy cultivation of all its graces, for the diligent performance and discharge of all its services. So long as the endeavour or the task, was to bring up his obedience to the standard of the jurisprudence of heaven, and so as at once to meet all the demands, and clear all the penalties of God's high and incommutable law, the burden of a felt impossibility weighed him down to inactivity and despair. But when told that the work on which in vain he might have wreaked and wasted all his energies is already done—in other words, when told of the complete atonement and perfect righteousness of Christ—human virtue is not overborne or extinguished thereby; it is only turned away from the fulfilment of an object by itself impracticable, but now achieved in another way, and set forth on that more hopeful career along which it presses forward by successive footsteps from grace to grace, till it appears perfect before God in Zion. Man could not, in the strength of his own energies, either implement the obligations of God's perfect, or far less sustain so as to liquidate the penalties of God's violated law. But man can,

with the aids of the all-powerful and regenerating Spirit, advance, and that indefinitely his own holiness. The righteousness of faith, so far from operating as an extinguisher on the righteousness of works, affords the only opening by which, under the impulse of gratitude, and the inspiration of heaven-born hope, to enter with alacrity and comfort on the labours of a new obedience. "I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds I will offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now unto the Lord in the presence of all his people." Justification is not the landing-place of Christianity. It is but the commencement, or the starting-post, where the emancipated children of love and liberty break forth on all the activities of a willing service. And so in our text, confession with the mouth is joined as the inseparable accompaniment to faith in the heart—such a confession as many of you witnessed yesterday [1]—Only, however, a good confession, if your walk and conversation afterwards be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If the main lesson I have tried to expound be understood and acted on, you will "hold fast your confidence and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." In one word, let me follow up by the lesson of another scripture: "Be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord—forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

[1] Delivered on the day after a Communion Sabbath.

LECTURE LXXXI.

ROMANS, x, 10—13.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Before entering on the consideration of these verses, we would briefly advert to one lesson, which, if not contained in the passage that we have just left, has at least been suggested by it. To bring Christ down from above, or to bring Him up from the dead, would be to present Him to the view of the senses, and make Him an object of sight—after which there could be no doubt of His resurrection. One of the common and current aphorisms which we hear most frequently is, that seeing is believing; yet though thus identified, there is a distinction made in Scripture between them. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, faith is defined the assurance of things not seen. A belief through the medium of the senses is differently regarded, and we may add far less valued than a belief in a testimony—belief in the word—belief in what prophets "have spoken."[1] It is thus that after His resurrection He upbraids those disciples, not who believed Him not after they had seen, but who believed not the report of those who had seen Him.[2]

[1] Luke, xxiv, 25. [2] Mark, xvi, 14.

It was on this principle too that He valued less the faith of Thomas, after he had at length given way under the power of an ocular demonstration. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen me, and yet have believed." When faith supports itself under the want of sensible helps and accompaniments—then it is that the "trial of it is precious"—when, though not seeing Christ, yet we love Him; and in whom, "though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."[1] We meet with the same high estimate of faith in many other places—that is, when it is faith in the naked word, faith without the aid of vision, the faith which maintains its strength and constancy against even the likelihoods of nature and experience, which simply reckons that what God hath said is true, and is "fully persuaded that what He hath promised He is able also to perform."[2]

Now there is another, a third way, in which an absent thing might be viewed by us—not as an object of sight, for we are supposing it so separate or removed as to be unseen by us—neither as an object of faith; but as an object of conception, an act often conjoined with faith, yet perfectly distinct from it—so distinct as to be referred by certain mental philosophers to a special power or faculty of its own. One might conceive a thing without any belief in its reality; and, on the other hand, though one can scarcely believe without some conception of the object of faith—yet may that conception be so dull and languid and hazy, as almost to justify

[1] 1 Peter, i, 7, 8. [2] Romans, iv, 21.

the expression of our believing in the dark. We should like you to discriminate between a belief in a thing and the conception of that thing. You might believe not only in the existence of an absent friend, but in the reality and warmth of his intense affection for yourself; and this belief might be as strong to-morrow as it is to-day—and yet it is possible, that your conception of all this might not be so lively or strong to-morrow as it is to-day. His benignant smile, his looks of graciousness, his whole countenance and manner and tones of voice, bespeaking the utmost cordiality and kind affection —these may all tell more vividly on the imagination at one time than another; and in proportion to the vivacity and force, wherewith they are thus presented and pictured forth as it were to the eye of the mind, will the spirits be exhilarated, and the whole man experience an animation and a comfort, as he dwells on a contemplation which the conceiving faculty has made for the time so bright and joyful to him. Now it must be obvious to the experience of all that this conception flits and fluctuates, as if dependent on the ever varying mood of the spirit—at one time gleaming forth towards the vivacity of sense, and at another fading almost onward in deeper and deeper shades of obscuration to extinction and utter vacancy. But the remarkable thing to be observed is, that, under all these varieties of conception, the faith might remain invariable, a constant quantity as it were, an element which abideth stedfastly and substantially the same amid all those changing hues which affect the colour or representation of the object, but do not

in the least affect our belief in its reality. There may be a dimness in the contemplation, without the slightest mixture of a doubt in the object contemplated. The man never lets go his confidence in his friend—though, just as this power of conception is in languid or vigorous exercise, he may sometimes have greater and sometimes less degrees of sensible comfort in the contemplation of his friendship.

What is true of an earthly friend, is true of our Friend in heaven. He is far removed out of sight, but may become the object of faith through the word that is nigh unto us. And he might also become the object of conception, which is a sort of substitute for sight, brightening and clearing as it sometimes does towards the vivacity of a sensible demonstration. But let us never forget, that as faith without sight is all the more pleasing to God in that it subsists on its own unborrowed strength without the aid of the senses—so might faith be in the absence of any lucid or enlivening conception, having nothing to sustain it but the simple credit which it gives to the word of the testimony. Yet we hold these bright and exhilarating views of the Saviour to be unspeakably precious—the manifestation of which He Himself tells us[1]—a most refreshing cordial to the spirit of a believer; and of which we have no doubt that, if analysed into its ingredients, it will be found, that it consists not merely in the greater force of evidence wherewith we are made to behold the Saviour, but in the quickening facility and power of conception where-

[1] John, xii., 21.

with we are enabled to set Him more vividly or impressively before us. "Nevertheless we should distinguish between the conception and the faith—because while the one may be a minister of sensible comfort, it is the other which is the guarantee of our salvation. The man who, to repair the insufficiency of the word, would bring down Christ from heaven, but exemplifies the man, who, as if to make up for the same insufficiency, strains but ineffectually to frame some graphical or picturesque idea of Him there. The danger is, that he may compass himself about with sparks of his own kindling, or walk in the light of his own fancy or his own fire. Let him keep then determinedly by the word which is nigh, rather than by the imagery wherewith he peoples the distinct and lofty places which are away from him. He who has conception but not faith, will at length lie down in sorrow. He who has faith, but from the want of conception walketh in darkness and has no light, is still bidden trust in the *name* of God and stay upon His word. He who conceiveth may have sensible comfort; but, with or without this, he who believeth is safe.[1]

Faith and conception may be so disjoined, that the one may be strong and never give forth a stronger exhibition of itself, than when the other, faint and feeble, is utterly unable to figure aught of the unseen and eternal things which are above. It may trust in the name of the Lord, even when the Lord Himself is shrouded in darkness from its view. It may stay upon God, even when the light of God's endearing and paternal countenance is not shining

[1] Isaiah i, 10, 15.

in its wonted force of manifestation upon the soul. The light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ may be hid for a season in deepest obscuration—yet during the whole of that season may the spiritual mourner, even in the midst of heaviness and discomfort, be fixed and settled on the certainties of the word; and this he may prove, if not by the raptures of a seraph, at least by the obedience of a servant—evincing by the toils and the sufferings and the sacrifices of his daily and devoted walk, that he can stake the world and every interest he has in it on the truth of Christ, that he could give up all for Him, that He could die for Him.

Yet while the primary and most essential requisite is our belief in the objects of faith, let us not undervalue the enjoyment and the spiritual good which lie in the luminous conception of them. Conception may lead astray, bringing us into converse with mere things of fancy. But conception deals with the true as well as the fictitious, brightening and enhancing our view of unseen realities, and thus bringing us into clearer and more intimate converse with the things of faith. To be gifted with such a faculty, even to be visited though only at times and intervals with such illumination, is an inestimable privilege to the Christian wayfarer—as conveying to his soul the glimpses and foretastes of his coming glory in heaven, and so yielding him a refreshment and strength for the fatigues of his journey through this lower world. There is a felt ecstacy in this transcendental light, like that which the apostles experienced when they beheld the transfiguration of our Saviour, and exclaimed it is

good to be here. How to attain or find our way to this light is a question therefore of deepest practical interest to all who make a real business of their eternity; nor are we aware of aught more interesting in the economy of the gospel, than that connection which it reveals between the plain duties of the Christian life, and the highest attainments, be it in grace or in knowledge, of the Christian experience. The way to get at the light after which we aspire, is to work for it. It is to deal aright with the word which is nigh unto us, and to do aright with the things which are nigh unto us. Whatever the sublime mysteriousness may be of those higher manifestations which shine on the soul of the advanced Christian, there is no mystery in the initial footsteps of the path which leads to them. It is not by the transcendental flights of an imagination labouring to realise Christ in heaven, and failing as signally in the enterprise as if the attempt had been to bring Christ down from heaven. It is by a humbler but more solid pathway—an every-day walk with God in the bidden obedience of the gospel—that part of the upright which as the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day.[1]

Ver. 10. 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Because in the Old Testament passage whence the quotation is taken, Moses makes mention both of the heart and mouth, Paul does the same, attributing to each such functions

[1] For Scriptural intimations of this connection between duty and discernment, see John, xiv, 21; Acts, v; 32; Matt. vi. 22; Matt. xxv, 29; Isa. lviii, 5—9; Psalm cxix, 100; xxv, 14; l, 23.

as are severally proper to them—as belief to the heart and confession to the mouth. It is true, that by our modern idea, the heart is the seat of the affections; and we should ascribe belief rather to the mind, which with us is the seat of the intellect: And hence the inference of many commentators is, that the belief of the New Testament—unlike to what it is in the common sense of the term,—is a thing of feeling as well as mere faith; and that the consent of the will as well as of the judgment, formed a constituent part of it. We, however, are more inclined to think that the ancients, whether Hebrew or Greek, did not proceed on the discriminations of our recent philosophy; and that the heart with them being equivalent to the whole of the inner man, might be the seat of all that proceeded therefrom, and so both of the emotions and the intellect—and this without merging the two into one, although they should emanate from the same fountain; and so we read of men understanding with their heart, nay of laying up in their hearts [1]—making the heart the seat of memory, even as is done by ourselves in the vulgar phrase of learning by heart. Still in point of just and sound metaphysics, we hold faith to be an act of the understanding alone; and that though affection may be both an immediate cause, and as immediate a consequent of the same, it is never properly an ingredient thereof. We confess ourselves not partial to this confounding of the various functions and faculties of the mind which are really distinct from each other; and we confess our preference for

[1] Luke, i, 66.

the views of those, who conceive of faith that, however it may have sprung beforehand from the desirousness of a heart visited with moral earnestness and prompting both to prayer and to enquiry; or, however it may issue afterwards in the feelings and desires of holiness—yet that faith in itself is an act of the mind purely intellectual, the judging of certain testimonies or certain propositions that they are true, the simple credence of such statements as are laid before us. We fear of any view different from this, that it tends to embarrass or to darken the freeness of the gospel salvation—while the view that we contend for is the only one which does full honour to the grace of God as all in all, and is at the same time eminently subservient to the practical righteousness as well as comfort of the believer. Though faith should be regarded as belief and nothing else, this is not to hinder but that it may have originated in a virtuous or good affection, or that the affections and deeds of virtue might follow abundantly in its train.

'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' Yet neither is it the personal but the judicial righteousness that is here spoken of—the righteousness of faith—that righteousness which is unto all and upon all who believe—not the righteousness here which is wrought in us by the Spirit; but that righteousness of Christ which is reckoned to us, and in virtue of which we are invested with that right to heaven which He by His obedience hath won for us, or are presented with a part and a lot in that inheritance which He purchased in behalf of a guilty world.' It becomes ours on be-

lieving. We believe unto righteousness — this righteousness being the object in which our faith terminates, the landing-place to which it carries us.

'And with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.' The apostle proceeds from an inward sentiment to the expression or manifestation thereof in an outward act; and such an act, as, *in these days*, was, very generally speaking, the sufficient token or pledge of a universal obedience. For then it held pre-eminently true, that he who confessed Christ forsook all, gave up all, made surrender or (which, as a manifestation of principle, was equivalent thereto) exposed themselves to the surrender and loss of all, by following after Christ. We read,[1] "that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue;" and this was but a specimen or sample of that larger excommunication which every man underwent, or at least hazarded, in the act of becoming an ostensible and declared Christian—an excommunication from all that was dear to nature—becoming liable thereby not merely to be put out of the synagogue, but to be put out of society; to incur the loss of all which they had; to renounce or be renounced, to forsake or be forsaken of, house and brethren and sisters and father and mother and wife and children and lands, yea of their own lives also, for the sake of Christ and of His gospel. No wonder then that confession was so honoured in these days, it being the exponent in fact and symbol of a universal discipleship. It gave evidence, that even as Christ suffered in the flesh, so these ready and resolved

[1] John, ix, 22.

followers of His had armed themselves likewise with the same mind—and prepared not only to suffer in the flesh but to cease from sin,[1] that they should no longer live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God. Well may it be said of every spirit who thus confesses Jesus Christ, that he is of God; and we may now understand, whenever such a confession is meant, how no man could say that Jesus was the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. All who were so actuated were in full readiness to drink of the cup which Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism, that baptism of deep affliction which He was baptized with; and we may well conceive of this fixity of principle and purpose, that, impossible to mere nature, it could not be attained unto but through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The confession of these days, in fact, as being the best evidence and pledge of a man's sincerity, was an effectual guarantee for his good works as well as his good words; and was therefore held in as great honour and demand, as obedience itself was. And as we read of those unworthy disciples who in works denied God—so may we learn from this expression that by works too we may confess Him; and though it be only the confession of the mouth that is spoken of in our text, yet when we consider the actuating spirit in which it originates, we are not to wonder though the same high ascriptions should be given to it, as we find given to the conformity of the whole man with the will of God and the prescriptions of the

[1] 1 Peter, iv, 1, 2.

gospel. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." It was because of their confessing Christ, that they had to endure a great fight of afflictions; but he that maintained his stedfastness notwithstanding, had the truth of our text literally fulfilled upon him. The confession he made was unto salvation—for "he that endureth to the end shall be saved."[1]

Understanding then, that, for reasons now given, confession was placed in the same rank, and had the same powers and consequences ascribed to it, with general obedience—it follows, that the apostle who tells us so often throughout his writings that we are saved by faith, in effect tells us at this place that we are saved by works. You must all have heard of the alleged contrariety between Paul and James upon this subject; but here there appears to be almost as strange a seeming contrariety between Paul and himself—not a real opposition of course in either instance, but the mere semblance of one, and which has been so often and so successfully disposed of by the explanations of those who undertake to effect a reconciliation, as they term it, between the two apostles, that we shall not at present repeat any of them. We shall only call attention to a distinction in the language of the apostle, when he expresses the several effects of faith upon the one hand, and of confession upon the other. When man believeth it is unto righteousness—whereas when he confesseth, or confession is made by him, it is unto salvation; and understanding righteous-

[1] Matthew x, 22.

ness, as it unquestionably ought to be in this place, in its forensic or legal meaning, we learn from the first clause of the verse before us, that by faith we are justified—while understanding confession as the equivalent of a universal obedience, we are told in the second clause that by works we are saved. The truth is, that justification and salvation are not perfectly synonymous. The former is part of the latter, but not the whole of it. To complete one's salvation, there must be deliverance from the power of sin as well as from its punishment; and accordingly, while reconciled by the death of Christ, we are saved by his life [1]—that is, because He lives, we shall live also; or because He hath overcome, we shall overcome also; or because of the grace dispensed upon us from the hands of a risen Saviour, He, through the work of His Spirit in us effectuates our sanctification—even as by His work in the flesh for us, He hath effectuated our acceptance with God. In like manner, if no man in these days could say that Jesus is the Lord but by the power of the Holy Ghost, then to be saved by the confession of the text, which is really tantamount to our thus saying, is to be saved by the operation of this heavenly agent—in perfect keeping with another declaration of the apostle, when he tells us that we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 11. 'For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.' That is either—First, Shall not be ashamed by the non-fulfilment of that which is the object of their con-

[1] Romans, v, 10.

fident expectation. It is a confidence which they might well cherish and avow—secure as they are from the mockery of any failure or disappointment in their hopes. All the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea and amen; and it is because of their certain and punctual accomplishment, that the hope which they inspire is a hope which maketh not ashamed.[1] When the verse is regarded in this view, its reference is to the distant future—not to the time past when the promises were made, not even to the present time when the promises are believed, but to that future time when in act and by performance the promises will all be made good. When found in very truth that the glory, now only revealed, and looked forward to but in perspective or by anticipation, is fully realised—then will the believer lift up his head and rejoice. Otherwise, ashamed of the vain and illusory imagination on which he had before rested, he would sink into despair.

Or, secondly, the text may be understood in reference to the present time, when the promises are only as yet believed, and the fulfilment of them is still in reserve. Even at this earlier stage, might faith have a present and powerful effect in repressing shame, and more especially the shame of making the avowal of itself, and so of testifying for Christ. Like every other principle of strong and felt urgency within, it may delight in the vent and forthgoing of its own utterance, and in bearing down the restraints whether of shame or of fear, which might have otherwise intercepted the expression of it. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."[2] "My

[1] Romans, v, 5. [2] Psalm cxvi, 10.

heart was hot within me, and the fire burned—then spake I with my tongue."[1] "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."[2] These verses point not to the future vindication and triumph of our faith by the verification of its object; but to the present antagonism and victory, so to speak, of the principle of faith over the principle of shame—as exemplified by our Saviour, who, for the joy that was set before Him, but was only yet in prospect, endured the cross and also despised the shame. Thus too the apostle was not ashamed, and that because of the certainty he felt in Him whom he believed, and the firm persuasion he had of His ability to save him. And so he bids Timothy not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, who Himself tells us—that whosoever shall be ashamed of Him and of His words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father. It is therefore a present feeling, a present sensibility, that is spoken of in all these passages; and of which it is required that in the strength of our faith it should be overruled, and not given way to. We like this view of the text. It binds so together the belief of its first clause with the confession of its second—making them, if not so identical, at least so inseparable, as fully to explain the common virtues or common effects which are ascribed to each of them; and fully to harmonise the saying, that 'confession is unto salvation,' with the saying, that "the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls."[3]

From the proposition of this verse, a certain

[1] Psalm xxxix, 3. [2] Matthew, xii 34. [3] 1 Peter, i, 9.

converse proposition might be drawn, that might well be used as a criterion by which to test and to ascertain the reality of our faith. If it be true that whosoever believeth on Him is not ashamed, then it should be true that whosoever is ashamed of Him doth not believe. Or in the terms of the preceding verse, Whosoever maketh not confession of Him with the mouth, believeth Him not with the heart. How comes it then, that Christ and all which is expressly Christian, are so habitually and systematically excluded from society as topics of conversation? What shall we say, even of those who are denominated the professing people, what shall we say of their silence on the sacred themes of the soul and the Saviour and eternity, amid the companionships of this world? When do we ever meet with the free and copious utterance that would flow from the mouth on these subjects, if only the heart was full of them? The general emigration of a whole neighbourhood from one country to another in this world, would be the constant talk of all its parties and throughout all its families, for months before the embarkation, and while the busy work of preparations and outfits was going on. How is it that we meet with nothing like this, on the subject of that universal emigration from one world to another, which, by successive transportations across the dark valley and shadow of death, will so surely and in so short a time, overtake the whole of our living population? Is it because there are no outfits, no preparations, and therefore no prospects to talk about?—these having no place in the converse, just because they have no place in the business or

in the hearts of men? They are seldom or never the subjects of speech, just because they are seldom or never the subjects of thought. Or if there be any who think of them, but are ashamed to speak of them—such we say is the overbearing magnitude of the interest at stake, that it needs but a realising sense of them to put to flight both the fear and the shame of this world. The engrossing affection of the great and the one thing needful would displace and subordinate every inferior affection of our nature; and, on the other hand, the total want of a practical earnestness or concern therein, as evinced by the tenor and talk of almost every company, might well justify the question—Verily, is there such a thing as faith upon the earth?

Ver. 12, 13. 'For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' But even a universal apostacy or unbelief would not make the faith of God to be of no effect. He is true, though every man should be a liar; and the precious truth announced in these verses invests with an ample warrant the messengers of salvation, who might go forth the bearers of a full and unexcepted commission, to assail even a whole world lying in wickedness and unconcern, by plying with the overtures of a free salvation, each and every individual of the great human family. God, it is said here, makes no difference between the Jew and the Greek; and there are some, who, in defending the articles of their own scientific theology, would make the universality of

the gospel offer lie in this—that, now when the middle wall of partition is broken down, it might be offered to men of every nation. But the Scriptural theology carries the universality farther down than this—and so as that the gospel might be offered, not merely to men of every nation, but to each man of every nation. God is not only no respecter of nations, He is no respecter of persons. It is not only whatsoever nation shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved; but whatsoever man of that nation shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved. We are not now probing into the depths of the Almighty's government; or speculating on the counsels of a predestinating God. But on the authority of these verses, we are attempting to give forth the plain and palpable duties of every minister and every hearer—which is for the former to knock at every single door, and crave admittance for the gospel into every single heart, making an honest, and in the most obvious sense of the term, a real tender of salvation to every man; and for the latter to respond with the same honesty and in full confidence, to the call that has been thus sounded in his hearing—So that his call back again shall not be of words merely. For as the confession which availeth is not with the mouth only, but proceedeth from faith in the heart, so the call which availeth is not one of utterance only, but proceedeth from desirousness in the heart; and whosoever so calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

LECTURE LXXXII

ROMANS, x, 14–21.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

The gospel should be preached to every creature—it being a universal message from heaven to earth, co-extensive with the species; and not only to be carried forth over all, but to be pressed on the specific acceptance of each. A commission thus universal should have had at our hands a universal fulfilment; but we have only to open our eyes, and see how palpably short it has come of this—both internally or within the limits of Christendom, and externally or abroad and over the face of the world. And yet we affect to wonder, as if it were something mysterious and inscrutable, at the partiality of the Divine government, in having limited the blessings of the Christian religion to so small a

portion of the human family. Before carrying the reproach so far upward, we had better first take account of our own immediate share in it; and deal with the proximate cause of this phenomenon, ere we take cognizance of any of its remote and anterior causes. We complain of a limited Christianity, but there was no limit in the terms of that commission which was put into our hands at the outset of this dispensation—and that in the form of a precept, Go and promulgate this gospel every where; accompanied with a promise, Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It is not time to charge the Almighty, or to arraign the methods of His administration—till we have enquired in how far this precept has been carried into operation; and then what the instances are in which, when the precept was fully acted up to, this promise has ever been withheld. Man's prone and precipitate inclination is to reckon with his God, and to leave unsettled all the while that reckoning which we ought first to hold with ourselves,—a transgression this both of piety and of sound philosophy—it being the dictate of each, instead of speculating on His part in the matter which is secret and belongs unto Him, fully to examine how we stand acquitted of our own part which is revealed and belongs to us and to our children.

Ver. 14, 15. 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach

the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' These verses give the first answer, the answer which is readiest and most within reach, to the question—How is it that the whole earth is not Christianised? God could, by an exercise of power and unlimited sovereignty, achieve this result at the instant bidding of His voice—even as on the first day of creation, He said let there be light, and there was light. But God hath, in the exercise of a wisdom, to us perhaps inscrutable, yet in perfect analogy with the many thousand processes of nature and providence, He hath chosen to ordain an instrumentality for the diffusion of the Christian religion over the world. Now it so happens that men are component, nay the chief parts of this instrumentality; and we should first enquire how they have done their part—so as to ascertain whether it be not we the men who are in fault, before daring to lay the fault upon God.

It is a sound doctrinal theology which acknowledges, amid the countless diversity of operations around us, that it is God who worketh all in all. But God worketh by means; and when a certain prescribed human agency enters into that system of means which He hath intituted, it is a sound practical theology to labour as assiduously in the bidden way, as if man worked all. It is one of the highest points of Christian wisdom, to combine the utmost dependence on God with the utmost diligence in the prosecution of all those activities which He Himself hath appointed—insomuch that though the Holy Spirit be the undoubted agent of every conversion, Paul held it no infringement on ortho-

doxy, to say as much as that, under our present economy, the conversion of the world, without the instrumentality of men, is impossible. 'How shall they believe, unless they hear? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach except they be sent?' He himself was converted, by a direct communication from heaven, apart from all converse with flesh and blood, receiving the gospel not of man nor taught it by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ—yet none more strenuous than he, in affirming the necessity of human co-operation, in the great work of evangelising the world. Not but that he imagined, in every instance as well as in his own, that faith is not of ourselves but is the gift of God; and that even when conveyed by the preaching of one man into the mind of another, it is but the pouring from one earthen vessel to another of a treasure which had come down from heaven—so that whenever, in any age or country of the world, that precious faith which is unto salvation is deposited in any heart, it is established by a supernatural agency, and standeth there not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. It is for Him however, and not for us, to make choice of His own pathway for the conveyance of His own blessings, and the propagation of His own spiritual influences into the souls of men; and if He choose to make one man His vehicle for the transference of light and grace into the heart of another, it is the part of him whom He has thus selected as His instrument, to labour with all his might and assiduity in the sacred duties of that vocation whereto he has been called. This prefer-

ence for the agency of men in the work of Christianisation is conspicuous in every age of the church; and at no time more than in the first age, even though it was the period of miracles and supernatural visitations. We have often looked on the history of the conversion of Cornelius as a striking illustration of this. God could have worked a saving faith in the heart of Cornelius, by an immediate suggestion from His own Spirit, or through the mouth of an angel. And He did send an angel to Cornelius, not however that he might preach the gospel to him, but that he might bid him send for Peter, and receive that gospel at the lips of a fellow-mortal. And God also sent to Peter a communication from heaven to prepare him for the message—thus doubling as it were the amount of miraculous agency, in order that the gospel might be heard by a yet unconverted child of Adam, not through the medium of a supernatural and angelic, but through the medium of a natural and a human utterance. Yet not so as that the natural should supersede or displace the supernatural—for while Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard. The function of Peter was the same with that of a minister or missionary in the present day —it was to tell Cornelius the words by which he and all his house should be saved. And the function of the Holy Ghost for the purpose of giving demonstration and efficiency to the word, is the same now as ever—He falls on us still even as He did on them at the beginning. Let no man put asunder the things which God hath joined; but let all in deed and in performance strive mightily for

the spread and prevalence of the gospel on the earth, and give no rest to God in prayer, that by His grace He might work in them mightily.

The application of all this to the question of missions, whether home or foreign, is quite obvious. Let these be multiplied to the uttermost, so as to fill up all the vacancies which are within, or to spread abroad over all the mighty spaces which are beyond the limits of Christendom. Yet all will be useless and effete, if unblest or unaccompanied by the Spirit of God. Some there are, men of devotion, like many perhaps of the Puritanic age, who have a contempt for machinery, and who think to succeed by prayer alone for the extension of our Redeemer's kingdom. Others there are, men of bustle and enterprise, like many perhaps of our present age, who live, if not in the contempt, at least in the neglect of supplication; and think to succeed in the work of Christian philanthropy, by the busy prosecution of those schemes and societies which have recently sprung up in the religious world. Neither will do singly—neither the human instrumentality alone without the agency from above; nor yet the celestial agency, which refuses to come forth but through an earthly apparatus which itself prescribes, and to the working of which it gives all its vitality and all its vigour. Without the conjunction of these, both the men of prayer and the men of performance will fall short of the object which their hearts are set upon. He who knows rightly to divide, or rather rightly to compound the word of truth, knows how to conjoin these, and so gives himself wholly, not to prayer

alone or to the ministry of the word alone—but like the apostles of old to prayer and the ministry of the word. The one sets up and works a machinery upon earth. The other brings down from heaven that inner element which actuates the movements, and imparts to them all their living energy. It is to this prolific union of devout and desirous hearts with busy hands, that the church of Christ stands indebted for all its prosperity, in those seasons of gracious revival, when the frequent and earnest preaching of the word has been preceded or accompanied by a spirit of frequent and importunate prayer. Thus alone can the word of God be caused mightily to grow and to prevail—be it in a household, or a parish, or an empire, or through the world at large.

'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.' Nothing can exceed the admirable tact and sagacity, wherewith Paul adapts his argument to the tastes and partialities of those with whom he at the time is holding converse. In an upright and honourable sense he was all things to all men. To the Greeks he was a Greek—as in his address to the people of Athens, when he quoted from their own poets, and reasoned with them from the mythology of their nation. And to the Jews he was a Jew—as in the passage before us, in which we can discern the same principle of accommodation—as indeed in all his recorded addresses to the men of that nation, when he never fails to quote abundantly from their own prophets, and to reason with them

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out of their own Scriptures. And the quotation before us seems eminently fitted to subserve, what was evidently a great object with Paul, throughout the whole of this epistle—that of reconciling his countrymen to the admission of the Gentiles into a religious equality with themselves. It is taken from one of their own most illustrious writers, to whom they could not turn back, without reading in almost immediate contiguity with the passage to which he refers them, of the salvation of the Gentiles along with the comfort of their own people and the redemption of Jerusalem. "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations" (Gentiles); and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."[1] But how could they behold that salvation—or, to understand their seeing in the mental sense of the term, how could they believe in it, unless they were told of it, unless it was preached to them, unless messengers were sent to them as well as to God's peculiar and favoured people? In other words, as the Gentiles were under the gospel economy to be made partakers of the same faith, and so of the same high privileges with themselves, and as they could not believe without hearing, nor hear without a preacher—it was necessary that the message of life should be propounded to them also: And thus he vindicates his own peculiar apostleship, in that he was commissioned as a chosen vessel to bear the tidings of salvation before the Gentiles as well as the children of Israel.

Ver. 16, 18–21. 'But they have not all obeyed

[1] Isaiah, lii, 7, 9, 10, 15.

the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?...But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' We have already said that ere we charge God with partiality in that the blessings of the Christian religion are so limited, we should first acquit ourselves of the universal commission to go and make a tender of these blessings to every creature under heaven; and so make trial of the promise which accompanies this injunction—"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." But ere we bring this experiment to any thing like a full and finished completion, we are anticipated by a decisive fact, and from which we know beforehand, that though the gospel were preached to all, and by competent messengers too, sent forth by God Himself—yet that all would not receive it. It had been so preached in many distinct neighbourhoods even by prophets and inspired apostles—yet without effect upon many, who heard but did not believe. It was prophesied by Esaias, that all should not obey the gospel, even though brought to their doors, or though reported to them, and so placed within the reach of their hearing it. 'Lord, who hath be-

lieved our report?' Or who hath believed the hearing which they have heard of us? The word translated report in this verse is the same with that translated hearing in the next.

There could be no mistake then as to their hearing. 'But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily.' He might have given historical proof of this, by quoting his own experience and that of his colleagues in the apostleship—who had so often in the past course of their ministry lifted their testimony in the hearing both of countrymen and others who rejected it—to whom they preached the gospel, which, though to some it was the savour of life unto life, was to many the savour of death unto death.

But in order to trace the line of continuity in this whole passage, we must look to the verses more in connection with each other.

Ver. 16–21. 'But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' It is obvious that one main design of this

epistle is to establish the common ground, on which Jews and Gentiles now stand under the Christian dispensation—in regard first, to the like disease or condemnation that were upon them both; then to the like remedy which they equally stand in need of; and, most offensive of all, or what required the most strenuous effort on the part of the apostle in reconciling to it the minds of his own countrymen, the same free appliance of that remedy to all upon the face of the earth,—which involved the admission of those, who were before aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, to the same faith and the same high privileges with themselves. This aim, which from first to last he never lets go or loses sight of, appears so early as in the first chapter, where he speaks of the gospel (i, 16) as being the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. After which, he enters more distinctly and at greater length on the theme in the second chapter (ii, 17–29), where he argues for the common religious footing on which these two now stand—evidently not without the apprehension, or rather the actual experience of a strong repugnance on the part of the Jewish mind to the conclusion which he was labouring to establish. He then—as if a truth revolting to the prejudices of those whom he was addressing should be unfolded gradually—he ventures, if I may say so, in the third chapter, on terms of greater expressness and particularity—charging the Jews with the same sinfulness as the Gentiles (iii, 9); and holding forth to both the same salvation, even that righteousness by faith which is unto all and upon all who believe (iii, 22)

'for there is no difference'—no difference he certainly means between Jews and Gentiles, though he does not here make use of these designations, as if he shrunk at first from naming the two, when for the first time he places them on the same even platform of acceptance with God. Yet ere the chapter closes, and as if waxing bolder in the progress of his argument, he does make distinct utterance, though under an aspect of greater generality, of the one Father in heaven being the God not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles—nay of His justifying the one whom he there calls the uncircumcision, in the same way that He justifies the other whom he distinguishes as the circumcision, which titles he keeps by throughout the whole of his remaining argument in the chapter which follows. He had experienced the sensitiveness of the Jewish prejudices, when the name of the Gentiles was introduced in connection with any such preferment as brought them up to a level with the men of their own nation—more especially on the occasion of that public address he made in person to a great multitude at Jerusalem, who heard him patiently till this word escaped from him; "and they gave him audience unto this word"[1]—after which there were no bounds to their indignation. We can fancy as if it were due to that admirable delicacy which is so palpably one of our apostle's great characteristics—that if, when holding converse with Jews, he has occasion to mention the Gentiles as of equal rank and consideration with themselves, he does it so frequently under the cover of a quotation from their own Scriptures.

[1] Acts, xxii, 22.

It is obvious from the whole substance and texture of his argument in this epistle to the Romans, that he feels himself dealing throughout with Jewish understandings, and with men of Jewish education. He never loses sight of the Old Testament; but seems at all times glad of an opportunity, whenever he can fortify his reasoning by passages and illustrations taken out of these Scriptures. There is great richness of such allusion in the fourth chapter; nor is it wholly absent from the fifth and seventh; and makes a full reappearance in the ninth, onward to those verses wherewith we are now occupied. In an earlier part of the epistle which we have quoted, where the apostle speaks of the righteousness by faith being unto all, he adds —"for there is no difference." And again in the part to which we have now come (x, 12)—in conjunction with those terms of glorious universality, "all" and "whosoever," he adds the very same words—"for there is no difference"—only telling us furthermore between whom—"no difference between the Jew and the Greek." He had before affirmed of Jews and Gentiles, that they laboured under the same disease, and that the same remedy was provided for them in heaven; and he is now employed in demonstrating, that, in order to the remedy having effect, the bearers of it on earth must carry it equally home to both—or that both must be alike preached unto, and plied with the same calls and overtures, by the messengers of a common salvation. And so he evidently feels himself again to be in contact with certain points of repulsion in the Jewish mind; and, for the purpose,

of gaining access thereunto, recurs to his usual expedients—speaking to their own familiar recognitions, and reasoning with them out of their own Scriptures.

He begins this work of quotation at the 5th verse, and continues it downward—till he had established the necessity of sending men over the world, to bring men to the faith of the gospel—Whence it follows, as the Gentiles by the new economy were to have a part in the same salvation through the medium of the same faith with the Jews, that, in order to their believing alike, they must be preached unto alike, for how can they believe without hearing, or hear without a preacher? —which preacher or preachers must be sent to them; and this he confirms in the 15th verse by a passage taken from one of the most celebrated of their prophets. But here he interposes in verse 16th, a needful and qualifying remark which might have been suggested indeed by another passage from the same prophet very near to the former one, and to which at all events the apostle expressly appeals. It follows not, that though preaching should be the ordinary or even the indispensable prerequisite to faith, it follows not that faith should always be the result of preaching. A given cause might be indispensable to a certain effect, and yet not always produce that effect. Though the hearing of the gospel were necessary to the believing of it, it follows not that all who hear should necessarily believe; and accordingly the apostle tells us, 'They have not all obeyed the gospel'—by which he undoubtedly means, that, of the all who have heard

it so many have not obeyed it. And he fortifies this assertion by the quotation from Isaiah, 'Who hath believed our report?' The question implies that few had believed; but it also implies, that though belief does not alway follow in the train of a previously heard report, yet that when it does take place, it is always or generally in the order of this succession—Or, in other words—Though hearing is not always followed up by a subsequent faith as its effect—yet that seldom or never does faith arise in the mind, but from an anterior hearing as its cause. And this explains the dependence of the 17th verse on the last clause of the 16th—a dependence more obvious to the reader of the original than it is in the translation; for the word 'report' in the one, and the word 'hearing' in the other, are both rendered from the same term[1] in the Greek. It helps also to impress the connection more strongly—that whereas in our English bibles the belief in the one verse and faith in the other, though they signify the same thing yet sound so differently, in the original the same radical is employed in both;[2] and these two verses would therefore have been translated more synonymously at least, if in the 16th it had been translated, Who hath believed in the hearing that we have sounded in his ears, (which though a complaint and implying therefore that few had believed, implies also that belief, if not the actual, was at least the proper consequent of hearing), which would have brought out the inference in the 17th more palpably, Therefore belief cometh by hearing, and hearing

[1] Ακοη. [2] Εκ πιστεως and πιστις.

by the word of God. The question, What plants have arisen from the seed which has been cast into the ground?—clearly implies, that, while all seeds do not germinate into plants, yet a plant never arises but from a seed, and that the one is the proper and causal antecedent of the other.

The question then is naturally started at this place, Whether the hearing indispensable to faith, has been carried abroad?—and a reply is given in the affirmative, couched in language all the more congenial to the Jewish ear, that it was taken from Scripture, and which conveys thus much at least, that the gospel ought to go forth as freely and universally throughout the world, as the light of the sun is spread abroad over the surface of it. And, in point of fact it had, even when the apostle was writing, been proclaimed far and wide beyond the limits of Judaism; and now there was no let or hindrance, in the nature and design of the economy itself, to restrain the diffusion of it through every place and territory where men were to be found. And accordingly it had sounded forth to the outskirts of the Roman empire, which was then spoken of in terms that properly signified the whole of the habitable earth—insomuch that Paul says of the word of the gospel, "which is come unto you as it is in all the world," and "which was preached to every creature which is under heaven."[1] So that to the question, Have men heard the gospel?—there could be no difficulty in giving the prompt and decisive reply, 'Yes verily.'

Ver. 19. After having replied in the preceding

[1] Colossians, i, 6, 23.

verse generally and for all mankind, the question is reiterated with a special reference to the children of Israel. Did not they in particular know?—had they also the advantage of being made to hear and be acquainted with the subject-matter of preaching? This Paul might have replied to in a clear and decided affirmative—grounding it on the events of his own age. They had a preference over the Gentiles in every respect. They saw Christ in the flesh—they witnessed His miracles—they heard His discourses—even after His ascension, and a commission was left with the apostles to go and preach the gospel unto all nations, still the priority was given to them: For though the apostles went forth with the message of salvation over all the earth, it was after beginning at Jerusalem; and in every place or nation they came to, it was their practice to seek after the Jews and preach to them first—till wearied out by the obstinate rejection of their doctrine, they made this protest against it—Since you hold yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo we turn to the Gentiles. Paul could have thus answered in his own person; but, as his general manner was, he goes back upon earlier times—for even then it may be said that the gospel was preached to those of that remoter period as well as unto us of the present day; and from the mouths of two of their own most honoured writers, he gives the same answer, and pronounces upon them the same condemnation. First Moses, who, on a former occasion, had said of them, "What nation is so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?"—this same Moses,

who thus affirmed the knowledge of the people of Israel to be above that of all the other people upon earth, says afterwards, and in the words here quoted, that, as they had abused these privileges, God would transfer them to others who had not been so distinguished, and so provoke them to jealousy by a people who hitherto had been no peculiar people to Him; and anger them by a foolish nation, a nation destitute of the knowledge which had been so plentifully communicated to themselves. And in verses 20th and 21st, Isaiah expresses himself in still bolder and clearer terms. But the boldness which he ascribes to Isaiah, the apostle very distinctly intimates, that he felt himself treading on delicate ground—engaged as he was in telling the Jews of their national misconduct, and of the forfeiture which they had thereby incurred of the national honours, which at one time singled them out and signalised them above all the rest of the human family. "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." All day long had God stretched forth his hands unto Israel—addressing them, and bringing Himself near unto them, and giving them the knowledge of His will and of His ways. Verily they have not all obeyed the gospel, even though pressed upon their acceptance—for these Israelites in particular, to whom the closest approaches had been made, and the fullest revelation had been given, turned out after all a disobedient and gainsaying people.

This somewhat unmanageable passage may be thus paraphrased. 'There is no difference between

Jew and Greek, for the same Lord and Maker of all, is rich to all who call on Him. For whosoever shall call on His name shall be saved. But how can they call on Him till they believe in Him, and how can they believe unless they hear of Him, and how can they hear but by a preacher? And in order to this, preachers must be sent, even as those were of whom Isaiah speaks, when hailing them as the messengers of good, he exclaims, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Yet it follows not that all who are thus preached unto shall believe. In point of fact, all did not put faith in the good tidings; and accordingly the same Isaiah complains of the smallness of their number —saying, Who hath believed our testimony? Yet though belief does not always come after a testimony, a testimony always, or at least ordinarily comes before the belief—for faith cometh by hearing, though not by all or any sort of hearing, but the hearing only of the word of God. Has not this word then been proclaimed to all? Yes truly —the barrier between Jew and Gentile is now moved away; and the Sun of righteousness should be made as free and patent to all as is the sun of nature. But did Israel share in this light? Yes, and that in a more signal and preeminent way; But, unworthy as they proved themselves of the privilege, even their own legislator threatened the removal of their candlestick to the other and darker places of the earth; and the highest of their prophets told them in still more decisive terms, that those high preferments of which they boasted,

should be taken away from them, and given to others—and that because of their continued resistance to a beseeching God, who had so long, but in vain, pressed on their acceptance the overtures of His great salvation.'

There are various and important topics for reflection presented throughout the passage which forms the ground-work of this Lecture. But we forbear the further consideration of them at present; and all the more readily, that the opportunity for a future treatment of them will not be wanting in what remains of the epistle. For the views which have been already given by us of the 17th verse we refer to a Sermon published many years ago.[1]

[1] First printed in 1812, and now to be found in our volume of 'Public and Occasional Sermons,' being vol. xi of the Series.

LECTURE LXXXIII.

ROMANS, xi, 1—5.

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

In the preceding chapter we are told of the perfect and unqualified freeness of the gospel—insomuch that it may be held forth, nay urged, with all simplicity and earnestness on the acceptance of every man; and in virtue of this, whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved. It follows therefore, that there is not a human creature under heaven, from whom the offers of this said gospel ought to be withheld; and it is on the undoubted truth of this position that we have founded at least one reply to a question put, and sometimes in the form of a charge or complaint against the equity of the Divine administration, Why the blessings of Christianity should be so limited in point of extent, or, Why a religion, expressly designed for all mankind, should have appropriated or taken full possession of so small a part of the human family? Our answer then was, that, ere we arraigned the policy or procedure of the Almighty in this matter,

we should first hold a reckoning with ourselves, and determine whether we stand exempted from all censure and crimination on account of it. Certain it is, that a full and unrestricted commission has been put into our hands—Go unto all nations, Go and preach the gospel unto every creature. Have we fulfilled this task? Before speculating on the part which God may have had in this result, would it not be well to enquire how far we stand acquitted of our own part in it? Ere we put the question, Why is it that all men do not believe—is there not another question which seems to have the natural precedency, Have all men been preached unto? Have missionaries yet gone abroad over all the dark places of the earth; or, even at our own doors, has the message of salvation been enough sounded forth, or pressed with sufficient importunity on the attention of all the families within the limits of Christendom? If in this we have failed or fallen short, which we have most glaringly, it is scarcely for us at least to charge God with partiality—the God who has put into our hands so liberal and large a warrant, and accompanied it with the promise too, that, in the discharge of it He would be with us always even unto the end of the world. Have we worked enough under the precept?—or prayed enough over the promise? It is scarcely for us at least to cast reproaches on the high government of Heaven, ere we first addressed ourselves and that with diligent hands and dependent hearts, to our assigned task upon earth; and then, after having overtured the gospel to all men, seen whether, as the effect of a universal proclamation, a universal Christianity did not follow in its train.

But this, however justly or pertinently it may be said, is yet far from a complete or adequate solution of the phenomenon in question. It is not enough to tell us that the gospel might be declared unto all men, and that all who believe shall be saved—when in point of fact all do not and will not believe it. As to the objective presentation thereof, there might be the utmost possible latitude and freeness in the gospel; but, in order to its taking effect, there must also be a subjective consent thereto on the part of those to whom it is addressed. Now it appears from thousands and thousands more of successive specimens, in the as many different localities where the experiment has been tried, that all who hear the gospel, even however rightly and authoritatively preached to them, do not obey the gospel; and this difference, this subjective difference between one man and another, is a fact or phenomenon which remains to be accounted for. We shall not here say over again what we have already said, when, expounding former chapters in this epistle, we were led to discuss the high topic of predestination. We then admitted, and still with all confidence repeat, that while there is diversity of operations, it is God who worketh all in all—that He is throned in universal sovereignty—as supreme in the inner and unseen world of spirits, as He is absolute and uncontrolled in fixing all the events which belong to the visible history of nature and providence. On this principle, we cannot look to the fact of one man believing the gospel, without connecting it with the fact that God has ordained it so—and neither can we look to the fact of ano-

ther man disobeying the gospel, without connecting it with the fact that God has left it so. If asked to assign the reason of God having so done, or the cause of this difference between one man and another, and that with the view of explaining or vindicating the counsels of the upper sanctuary—we have no other answer to make, but make it frankly and immediately, that we cannot tell. At an earlier stage of this exposition, we have attempted to draw what we conceive to be the limit between the knowable and the unknowable in this question; and have also there stated the principles on which I hold, that, whatever difficulty there may be in explaining the procedure of God, this carries in it no excuse for the wickedness of man. The moral certainties in the one field, are not in the least bedimmed or overshaded, by the metaphysical obscurities which rest on the other and the more arduous field of speculation. Man's unbelief, if resolvible into man's wilfulness, and our Saviour does resolve it into the evil of their own doings,[1] stands as clearly out a rightful object of condemnation, whether the policy and jurisprudence of Heaven are thrown open to our view, or shrouded in deepest secrecy. If the question be put, Why are some only preached unto, and not all? we reply, that as far as this proceeds from the indifference of those called Christians to the souls of the perishing millions around them, the fault lies clearly with man... If the question be put, Why do some only of those preached unto believe and not all? we reply, that as far as this proceeds from the love of darkness and the

[1] John, iii, 19.

power of depravity, the perversity and the fault still lie clearly with man. But if the question be put, Why is it that the Spirit from on high selects some only, whom He disposes to receive and obey the gospel, and not all? we confess ourselves overawed by the difficulties of a theme so transcendentally and so hopelessly above us; and would join the apostle in saying, Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

Ver. 1.—'I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.' At the conclusion of the last chapter we find the apostle saying, that, all day long, or during the whole period of their political subsistence as a nation, God had held converse, whether in the way of remonstrance or entreaty, with the children of Israel—Sending them, from one age to another, prophets and righteous men, whom they slew and persecuted—till at length they crucified the Lord of glory, after which, by an act of terrible retribution, the whole Jewish economy, both civil and ecclesiastical, was utterly exterminated, or swept off by the "besom of destruction" from the face of the earth. The question of our present verse follows quite naturally in the train of such a contemplation. Hath God then entirely rejected His ancient people? Hath He wholly and conclusively cast them away? to which question Paul's answer is a prompt and emphatic negative; and, in confirmation of which, he quotes himself as a specimen. He himself was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham and tribe of Benjamin, or as he elsewhere

says, an Hebrew of the Hebrews—yet, so far from being an outcast, was a convert to the new faith, and in full possession both of its hopes and privileges. It is perhaps somewhat gratuitous in some to imagine that he particularises his tribe, because it was the last and least of the twelve, and at one time indeed on the eve of its extermination—as all the more striking illustration or proof, that, great and signal though the days of their calamitous visitation had been, yet "the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance."[1] But, instead of straining at ingenuities of this sort, let us be satisfied with the idea, that Paul meant nothing more by the specification of his tribe, than simply to authenticate his genealogy as a Jew, and so make it all the more palpable that he incurred no forfeiture thereby—seeing that he was not only himself gifted with the unsearchable riches of Christ, but commissioned to preach, and thus make a full tender of them to others also.

Ver. 2, 3. 'God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.' God did not reject all Israel. He did not cast off those of whom He foreknew, and who were the objects not of his prescience only, but of His predestination to eternal blessedness. "Whom he did foreknow them he did predestinate." We are here reminded of the expression, that "they are not all Israel

[1] Psalm xciv, 14.

which are of Israel." God knoweth His own. He hath known them from the beginning, and all His purposes regarding them shall stand.

And these gracious purposes of the Almighty often extend to a greater number than we think; and of this the apostle gives a most memorable historic illustration in the case of the prophet Elijah—who cast a despairing eye over the land of Israel, and could not recognise over the whole length and breadth of it, even so much as one true worshipper. He made complaint to God of a universal apostacy—grounding, as is often done in all sciences and all subjects, a hasty generalisation on his own limited and personal experience. But, God seeth not as man seeth. He knew the children of His own election, His own "hidden ones," as they have been termed; and could discern no less than seven thousand, when the prophet, gifted and endowed as he was, could not fix on a single individual. God knew them now as well as foreknew them (ver. 2) from all eternity; but it is altogether worthy of observation, that it is not by their election that He marks them out to Elijah. He does not read their names to him out of the book of life in heaven, or make any revelation of the secret purposes respecting them which He had from everlasting. He singles them out to the prophet by a sensible and a present mark, by a great and palpable act of obedience to His will upon earth. 'But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.'—Ver. 4.

Now we hold it of great theological importance.

to notice this peculiarity. God might have told Elijah of His primitive decree respecting these men. But no—He prefers telling him of their present doings. Known to Himself are all His works, and among the rest, the state of these seven thousand men from the beginning of the world; and on this high and transcendental ground, He could have told the prophet of their safety. But, instead of this, He chooses what may be called a lower and experimental ground, on which to indicate or make known to him the condition of these men as children of God's own family. They had not bowed the knee to Baal; and this He thought to be ground enough on which to satisfy the mind of Elijah—thereby maintaining and exemplifying the distinction between the secret things which belong unto God, and the revealed things which belong to us and to our children.

And surely if God, even at the time of a special and extraordinary communication to one of His highest prophets—when telling him of these seven thousand men—reserved the secret of their predestination, and laid all the stress upon their practice—Surely it is not for us, unvisited by any such illumination, to explore the dark recesses of a past eternity, or seek to open the book of God's decrees, that we may find the names of the persons who are recorded there. There is a better method, and one nearer at hand, by which to assure ourselves that we are the subjects of a blessed ordination, even by doing as these Hebrew saints in the days of Elijah, by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and

so knew them from all eternity. But man knoweth them that are the Lord's in another way; and this in virtue of the perfect, the never-failing harmony, which obtains between the election and the sanctification. It is true that God predestinates to eternal life, but never without predestinating those whom He designs for this glorious inheritance to be conformed to the image of His Son.[1] Election is anterior to character—Yet so unbroken is the connection between them, that character becomes a criterion by which to ascertain the election. For this we need not aspire to the inaccessible steeps which are above, but have only to persevere in the toils of our appointed task below. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and some there are who love to carry upward their speculation there, even to the highest point of a high and supralapsarian Calvinism. Let not this supersede the carefulness wherewith every Christian should observe, nor yet the earnestness wherewith every Christian minister should urge the saying—"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."[2]

But there is something more in this verse which we have not yet adverted to—fitted to animate and cheer the heart of him who eyes with despondency the present moral and religious state, whether of the country or of the world. We mean the superiority by which God's estimate, or the true estimate, of what was still good in Israel, exceeded in amount that of the prophet. The 'even so' of the next verse warrants our making this application.

[1] Romans, viii, 29. [2] 2 Timothy, ii, 19.

Elijah's imagination was, that he stood alone; but God knew better, and told him of seven thousand who were like-minded with himself. And so are there many in this our day, and sometimes the more saintly and spiritual are the most liable to this miscalculation, who, as they contemplate the prevalence of infidelity and wickedness around them, underrate the Christianity both of their own neighbourhood and of the nation at large. The number of God's hidden ones may be greater than we think of—known only to Him, and in places where we have no suspicion of their existence. It is thus that the pleasing discovery is sometimes made within the bosom of vicinities and households where we least expected it; and many, we trust, even at short distances from our own habitation, are the unseen heirs of grace and immortality, whom we shall never recognise as such till we meet them in heaven. It were better certainly for the interests both of personal and public Christianity, that all real disciples of the truth as it is in Jesus, should know each other better, and company with each other more. And this makes our obligation all the more imperative of "confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus,"[1] or of coming forth with those frank and intrepid avowals which might "declare plainly that they seek a country"[2]—and thus, by leading to a greater mutual acquaintanceship, might bring these fellow-travellers to Zion more closely and constantly beside each other. It were well in these expectants of a higher citizenship, these voyagers for heaven, to seek out each other

[1] Rom. x. 9. [2] Heb. xi. 14.

by the way—and that not merely for a benefit to themselves, from the fellowship or communion of saints here; but for the greater command which it would enable them to wield over the moral destinies of the world.[1] Union, it has often been said, is strength; but it is not in the secret, but in the ostensible union of the friends and followers of Christianity, that the great strength of their cause lies; and what with the greater force of that cementing principle which binds them together, as well as the mighty hold which their peculiar objects have over conscience, the highest faculty of our nature, we should look for the greatest possible results from their visible combination—in speeding onward the triumphs of the faith, or the full and final establishment in the world of the empire of Truth and Righteousness.

And it is not enough that we look to the state of Christianity as it now stands. We should look to Christianity in progress. For by however small a fraction we may compute its hold of our species now, a time is coming when we shall cease to count it by minorities and remnants. The eye of God not only explores the present; but, with a thorough cognizance of time as well as space, it reaches onward to the most distant futurity. He not only knows, but He foreknows. By the voice of an immediate revelation, He gave comfort to the despairing heart of Elijah, when He told him of the numbers, who, even at the time of what seemed an all but universal defection and idolatry, still held by the true religion. And by the voice of prophecy in Scripture, He gives the like comfort

[1] John, xvii, 21.

to us, as we cast perhaps a desponding eye over the moral state and prospects of the world—in the bright perspective which He has there opened up to us, of the enlargement and the triumphs that still await the gospel of His Son. For amid all that is fitted to darken and discourage, we should recollect of the present that it is but the infancy of the Christian religion, and that we are yet among the struggles and the uncertainties of its embryo state. To have some idea of the glorious and magnificent expansion before us, we have only to look at the millennium of our regenerated world in the dimensions of prophecy, where every day is a year and every year is made up of centuries—insomuch that what may be termed the middle age of Christianity, is reckoned by only three years and a half, comprehensive though it be of many generations. And beyond this spectacle of blessedness and glory, we have the glimpse of further and larger developments, which, in the closing chapters of the book of Revelation, retire onward from the view till lost in the distances of eternity. Could we see the whole in the light of the Infinite Mind, the perfect wisdom and perfect goodness of all His purposes would be seen most gloriously; and as even in one of Israel's darkest days, when He told of the seven thousand whom He reserved to Himself, He alleviated the brooding imagination of the prophet, and taught him not to think so despairingly of the state of his nation—so could we be made to behold across our present day of small things, the evolutions of a greatness and prosperity still in reserve even for a world now lying in wickedness; or did the mighty

and successive eras of the Divine administration rise in vision before us, then, instead of looking forward with dejection or dismay, we should lift up our heads and rejoice in the destinies of our species.

But though the apostle, in the course of this chapter, extends his regards to futurity; and lays before us, though in dim transparency, the varying fortunes both of Jews and Gentiles in distant ages —he has not yet quitted the consideration of matters as they stood at the time when he was writing, and accordingly tells us in the 5th verse, that even of his own countrymen there was at that moment a remnant who should be saved. We may indeed gather directly from the Scriptural narrative, the evidences of a goodly number of converts to the gospel, or at least of professing disciples, from among the children of Israel. We have first the apostles; and doubtless so many of Hebrew extraction, in the hundred and twenty who were with them on the day of Pentecost; and also of the thousands who believed anterior to the calling of the Gentiles; and further, all of that great company of the priests who were obedient to the faith [1] —all in harmony with the assertion of Paul, that, 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.'

Ver. 5. Grace in the New Testament signifies either a gift, or the kindness which prompted the gift. There can be no misunderstanding of it, for example, in the former sense, when in 1 Cor. xvi, 3, the apostle speaks of bringing their *liberality* to Jerusalem—that is, the fruit of their liberality; so rendered from the original word, commonly trans-

[1] Acts, vi, 7.

lated into grace throughout Scripture. And there can be as little misunderstanding of it in the latter sense, when the same Greek word is translated into favour in Luke, ii, 52, where we read, that Jesus increased in favour with God and man. In those instances where the gift is specified in connection with the grace which originated or conveyed it, this leaves no other meaning for the grace than the kindness, which is a very common and perhaps its primary signification. For example, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation,"[1] where salvation is the gift, and grace the kindness of the giver—"Grace reigneth unto eternal life," where eternal life is the gift, and grace the goodness which prompted it of Him whose gift it is—"Being justified freely by his grace," where the being justified or justification is the gift, and grace is the kind or generous disposition of Him who hath conferred it. And to close our list of instances with the verse which is before us—'The election of grace'—where grace is the cause, election the effect; or where election is the gift, and grace is the kindness of the Giver to him on whom He hath bestowed it. It is thus that the election of grace has been defined gratuitous election—the election of pure kindness or good-will—the fruit of a generosity altogether spontaneous—a present in short, and not a payment in return for any service or in consideration of any merit on the part of him who is the object of it.

Now this distinction between the kindness which prompts a gift and the gift itself; or between the generosity as it exists in the bosom of the dispenser and the fruit of that generosity, as imparted in the

[1] Titus, ii, 11.

shape of a service done or a benefit rendered to him who is the object of it—in a word, between the beneficence and the benefaction, enables us to discriminate between the different kinds of grace, which, though all emanating from the same fountain, even the good-will of Him who is in heaven, yet are each characterised or specified, and so as to distinguish them from the rest, by the distinct and particular good done to him in behalf of whom the grace and goodness of the Father of all spirits has been exercised. Thus there might be a justifying grace, as when God justifies the ungodly; or a sanctifying grace, as when God bestows His Spirit to help our infirmities; or, comprehensive of both, a saving grace, as when it is said "by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God:" Or, finally, the grace of our present text, the electing grace, here termed the grace of election—that in the exercise of which He set His special love on certain of His creatures from all eternity, as on the seven thousand of Israel whom He reserved unto Himself, and who, in virtue of this His distinguishing favour, were borne onward in safety through all the dangers and temptations of their earthly pilgrimage, till admitted in secure and everlasting enjoyment to the blessedness of heaven.

[1] Ephesians, ii, 5, 8.

LECTURE LXXXIV.

ROMANS, xi, 6—10.

And if by grâce, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway."

THERE is one very obvious distinction between the electing grace of God, and the other sorts of it which have now been specified. In the election of any man thus favoured and thus signalised, God stood alone. The act took place before that the man was born, nay before the foundation of the world.[1] It is not only prior to all the other forth-puttings of Divine grace, but it gives birth to them all. If it be true that none but the elect shall obtain the kingdom of heaven; and it be also true that unless we are justified, and unless we are made holy, we shall not enter therein—then must every elect sinner have both the justifying and the sanctifying grace put forth upon him, ere that he reaches his final destination; and the connection is not more inseparable between any consequents in nature or history, and the antecedents from which they have sprung, than that which binds together

[1] Ephesians, i, 4.

the justification and the sanctification which take place on earth with the election which took place in heaven—the one, in fact, being the source or the fountain-head whence the others flow. They follow each other like the links of a chain stretching backward to the eternity that is past, and forward to the eternity which is to come. Paul enumerates a few of these links, not all of them contiguous,—for other links than these he mentions, and intermediate between them, could be supplied both from other Scripture and from experience. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, (them he also sanctified; and whom he sanctified,) them he also glorified."

We have already said of the great and primary act of grace, the grace of election, that at the time of passing it, God was the alone party; and in this respect it stands distinguished from the other or subordinate acts of grace. For in these last man *bears* a part—nay we should hold it the evidence of a sensitive and extreme, and in fact ill-understood orthodoxy, to shrink from the assertion, that in these last man *acts* a part. By saying so, we infringe not in the least on the supremacy of God; nor abridge by ever so little the agency of His grace, as being all in all in the business of man's salvation. It is most true that He worketh all in all; but He worketh on every distinct subject of His power agreeably to its distinct and characteristic nature. When working in the world of inorganic matter, He does not change the elements or bereave them of their respective properties and

forces; but upholding them in these, and preserving the distinction between them—He maketh the winds and the waters and the lightnings, and even the inert and solid earth we tread upon, the instruments of His pleasure. When He worketh in the animal or vegetable kingdoms, He reverses not one law or process of physiology; but operating on every thing according to its kind, and without violence done either to the generical or specifical varieties of each—still it is He who "causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth;"[1] and it is He also, who maintains the powers and the instincts of every living creature, as when in the sublime language of Job, He giveth to the horse its strength and clotheth his neck with thunder. And it is even so in the moral world. Every where He is all in all—supreme in the higher as in the lower departments of nature; and yet neither obliterating the characteristics, nor overbearing the functions of any individual thing in which or by which He is pleased to operate—whether it be a plant, or an animal, or finally a man—over whom He has the entire and resistless sovereignty, yet exercises it with perfect conformity to all the feelings and faculties of his moral nature—his conscience—his intelligence—his choice—and the whole busy play of his emotions and purposes and endeavours. God worketh all in all, and as completely in man as in any other of His creatures. But what is it that He worketh in him? He worketh in him to will and to do. So that there is room both for the sovereign grace of God the Creator,

[1] Psalm civ, 14.

and the spontaneous acting of man the creature. In all that is good, and therefore agreeable to God's good pleasure, the creature acts just in the degree, be it great or small, in which the Creator actuates. And therefore it is that in those acts of grace, which, as contradistinguished from its great and primary act, or the grace of election, we termed its subordinate acts—we say not merely that man bears a part, but even acts a part—As in believing, though faith be indeed the gift of God;[1] or in understanding, though it be the Spirit who opens the understanding to understand the Scriptures; or in attending, though it be the Lord that openeth the heart to attend, as He did that of Lydia;[2] or in praying, though it be from above that the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured upon us;[3] or in willing, though it be God alone who makes us willing for good in the day of His power;[4] or in striving, though we can strive mightily only according to His working who worketh in us mightily;[5] and finally, in the business of purifying ourselves and perfecting our own holiness, though this can only be as fellow-workers with God, who have not received His grace or His promises in vain, when God will dwell in us and walk in us.[6] In all these instances there is a grace put forth from on high, and this responded to by being acted on from below. This may serve to establish our discrimination between the primary act of grace, even that of election, in which man has no part, and the subordinate acts, in which man has a part—and termed by us subordinate, not only because posterior in

[1] Ephes., ii, 8. [2] Acts, xvi, 14. [3] Zech., xii, 10.
[4] Psalm cx, 3. [5] Colos., i, 29. [6] 2 Cor., vii, 1; vi, 1, 16.

time, but because dependent in the order of cause and effect on the preordination from which they all have germinated. It is obvious that man had no part in the primary act, any more than he has had a part in his own creation. But it is alike obvious that he has a part in the subordinate acts, though a part of as entire subjection as is that of the clay in the hands of the potter. It is a part however; and such a part as properly and characteristically belongs to a willing, understanding, purposing, and acting creature. And so he believes, perhaps after enquiry and prayer, in order to his justification; and he obeys, with prayer and painstaking both, in order to his sanctification; and while nothing is more true than that by grace alone he is saved, yet in perfect harmony with this, and as being a grace which both teaches and enables him to live soberly righteously and godly—it is equally true that it is for him to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.

Now we hold it of capital importance, both for rightly dividing the word of truth and for the guidance of our practical Christianity, clearly to understand—that there is nothing in the consideration of the primary grace passed in heaven long ago, which should in the very least affect or embarrass the part we ought to take on earth in that subordinate grace wherewith we have presently to do. We are the more anxious to press this home, because of the imagination—that the one is a barrier in the way of our dealing freely and confidently with the other, just as is prescribed and plainly laid down for us in Scripture. Whatever your capacity may be for

the doctrine of election—whether it be a strong meat which you are able for; or, if fit only for the milk which serves to the nourishment of babes, you ought not to meddle with it—this cannot change, nor should it in the slightest darken, those stable categories of Scripture, that concern either the duties to be done by all, or the calls and the promises which are there held out to all. This doctrine must be profitable to some at least, else it would have formed no part or parcel of Scripture,[1] though perhaps it may not yet have been profitable to you—nay in danger, it may be, of being so perverted and misunderstood, as to be wrested by you to your own hurt. God may at length, or He may not, reveal even this unto you, as He does to others who are perfect.[2] But be this as it may—let that great and primary deed of grace which took place amid the counsels of the past eternity, and was transacted when God stood alone—let that be to you a lofty and transcendental theme which you cannot lay hold of, but which must remain an inaccessible mystery till the time cometh when you shall know even as you are known—There is, posterior to this and subordinate to this, a grace, in the operation of which God standeth not alone, but which He brings to bear on earth's lowly platform—that here it may circulate at large and come into busy converse with the hearts and among the habitations of men. Of this grace as placed within the reach of all, it is the duty of all to avail themselves. "Ask, and ye shall receive: Seek, and ye shall find"—Pray for the Holy Spirit, and He shall be given to you—Believe, and ye shall be saved; and;

[1] 2 Timothy, iii, 16. [2] Philippians, iii, 15.

in order to this belief, give earnest heed to the things which are spoken—These are all so many parts and manifestations of that subordinate, or as it may be termed, of that accessible or available grace whereof I am now speaking, and of which each man is called on to avail himself; and that without once bestowing a thought or a conjecture on the question, whether he has or has not a part in the grace of election. These are the revealed and the patent and the palpable things we have to do with here; and they ought not to be complicated with the hidden things, which lie far out of sight among the viewless eminences of the region that is above us. We cannot in any possible way change our election, or make it surer than it is in itself. Neither can we make it surer than it already is unto God. Yet there is a way, and that too a way of diligence in certain things,[1] by which we may make it sure unto ourselves—"for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." No doubt it is by the election of grace, that a remnant of Jews was preserved to the exclusion of the rest of the nation; but there is no such election as should forclose the application to that outcast people of all that available grace, the means and instruments of which have been so amply put into our hands. It was upon their seeking wrongly, and not on election (ix, 32) that their rejection immediately or proximately turned; and again upon their seeking rightly will their restoration as immediately turn. "If they bide not still in unbelief," they will certainly be recalled; and there is nothing respecting them in the book of secret destiny which will hinder this

[1] 2 Peter, i, 10.

result. Let the things which are written there be as impenetrably shrouded as they may, our way is clear—which is, to ply the children of Israel with the offers of salvation, and give no rest to God in prayer till He make Jerusalem a praise upon the earth. And for speeding onward the work of home Christianity our way is equally clear—which is, for ministers, on the one hand, to preach it urgently and freely in the hearing of every man; and for aspiring disciples, on the other, to read and to supplicate and to reform the evils of their doings, and not only to seek but to strive, nay even to press with all vigour and violence into the kingdom of heaven, till they take it by force.'

Ver. 6. 'And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.' For the full and clear exposition of this remarkable verse, it must be taken to pieces, that several distinct things may be adverted to.

'And if by grace.' If what by grace? Look to the preceding verse. 'There is a remnant according to the election of grace, and if by grace.' If it be by grace that there is a remnant—or if it be of grace that God has elected; or, looking to the anterior verse, if God have reserved them to Himself by grace.[1] The apostle is here making statement of the cause or origin to which the selection of a certain number as God's own peculiar people, is to be referred. Their selection is by grace—a matter of mere favour—of free generosity and goodwill, and so altogether a gift on the part of God.

[1] Ver. 4, κατάλειμα—Ver. 5, λεῖμμα.

'Then is it no more of works.' Grace is not only the cause of God having reserved a certain number to Himself; but it is the sole cause. He makes mention of another and a rival cause which has often been assigned for this preference of the elect by God; but he does so for the purpose of rejecting it—and thereby fortifies the simple assertion which he had made, or makes a more strenuous asseveration of it. He utterly repudiates the idea of its being a reward or recompence for works done, or we may add, for works foreseen. It is not of works in any way; but altogether a thing of sovereign and spontaneous bounty. It is a present, not a payment—a thing freely conferred by God, not rightfully claimed or challenged by man. Yet though not of or by works, it may be to works. That is a different matter. Though it is not because we have lived righteously that we are made the objects of this grace, yet because the objects of this grace are we both taught and enabled to live righteously.[1] "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Yet, after all, created unto good works—for the same God who ordains to everlasting life, ordains also the heirs of a blissful eternity to walk in them.[2] It is interesting to observe that the same high and absolute terms which guarantee the final salvation of the elect, guarantee also the virtuousness of their character and conduct. They are ordained, it is true, to eternal life[3]—yet are they ordained also to walk in good works.[4] And they are predestinated to be His children[5]—yet predestinated to be conformed unto the image of

[1] Titus, ii, 11, 12. [2] Eph. ii, 9, 10. [3] Acts, xiii, 48.
[4] Ephesians, ii, 10. [5] Ephesians i, 5.

His Son.[1] And they are chosen before the foundation of the world—yet chosen to be holy, and without blame in love.[2] And they are elect according to foreknowledge—yet is it an election sealed and confirmed by the sanctification of the Spirit, as well as belief of the truth.[3]

'Otherwise grace is no more grace.' By this clause there is an advance made in the apostle's argument; and we are made to know of grace and works, that, not only are they distinct, but in the matter at issue they are opposites, or incompatible, nay mutually destructive the one of the other. What is earned by service is not received as a gift. As far as you make it a thing of favour, you annihilate it as a thing of merit; or as far as you make it a thing of merit, you annihilate it as a thing of favour. Neither must we understand it to be so far of works and so far of grace, or compounded and made up as it were of these two categories. The doctrine of the apostle here, as of the New Testament everywhere, is, that God's friendship is either of works wholly or of grace wholly. There is no intermediate ground between the first and second covenants—the one being altogether of works, and the other altogether of bounty. It is not of works in part and of grace in part, but either of grace entirely and works not at all, or of works entirely and grace not at all. It is by grace and not of works by ever so little, lest to the extent of that little any man should boast,[4] or lest to the extent of that little it should be of debt.[5] These two elements are not only separated, but placed in

[1] Rom. viii, 29. [2] Eph. i, 4. [3] 1 Pet. i, 2.
[4] Eph. ii, 9. [5] Romans, iv, 4.

opposition to each other, and so in fact as to make it a war of extermination between them. The attempt of piecing the one to the other, or of mixing together the two covenants, is utterly repudiated in Scripture, as fatal to the peace of the believer, and subversive of the whole economy of the gospel.

"But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.' This whole clause is by critics of greatest authority rejected as an interpolation. It is but an expression, or more properly a reiteration of the same truth; and signifies that, of the two elements in question, as grace would utterly dispossess works from having ought to do in the matter of our acceptance with God, so works would as wholly and effectually dispossess grace.

That this holds true of God's electing grace is quite obvious, both from the nature of the grace itself and from other parts of Scripture. The children of election are made so before that they are born, or had yet done either good or evil—and this that the purpose of God might stand according to election, and not of works, but of Him that calleth.[1] In the act of choosing or predestinating at the first, works could have no place; and grace was all in all. Then God was alone. Out and out the destiny of the blest to their everlasting happiness is a thing of His determination—a determination including, no doubt, the previous or preparatory works of each, as well as his final salvation, but still a determination which was at once the primary cause and fountain-head of both.

And, what to us at least is of practically greater

[1] Romans, ix, 11.

importance, the same holds true not of electing grace merely, but of justifying grace also. We hold it as being of prime and vital magnitude, for else the gospel were nullified, that we should understand our justification to be altogether of grace, and not in the least, not at all of works. Our meritorious acceptance with God, or as it may be termed our judicial right of entry into heaven, rests upon a basis that is one and homogeneous, consisting of but a single ingredient, even that of grace —grace through the righteousness of Christ [1]—at least to the utter exclusion of our own works as the other ingredient, the admixture whereof, though in but the smallest item or iota, would operate as a vitiating flaw to deteriorate, nay utterly pervert the pure quality or essence of that which constitutes the available righteousness of a sinner before that Lawgiver, of whose throne justice and judgment are the habitation. Let a man's own deservings be admitted by ever so little, as forming part of his plea in law for the rewards of eternity; and the question would instantly be stirred—has that little been made out?—on which we should have aspirants for heaven of two sorts—First, they of more delicate and enlightened conscience, who always and with good reason dissatisfied with themselves, would be incessantly seeking rest and never finding it. Secondly, they of blunter moral sensibility, who, under their system of at least a little human virtue to eke out the price or purchase-money for a place in heaven, can sit at ease, and just because they can make so little serve. The two elements of our text, the grace and the

[1] Romans, v, 21.

works, in the matter of justification, will not amalgamate—for let works but enter in proportion and degree however small: And it either, on the one hand, wakens up again all the jealousies and disquietudes of the old covenant; or infuses that mercantile and mercenary spirit which, labouring to drive a hard bargain for heaven, both limits the amount and secularises the character of our obedience—making it as unlike as possible, whether in respect of indefinite progress or willing alacrity and delight, to the services of heaven-born love and liberty. We may hence see the moral purpose of the Epistle to the Galatians as part of the Bible. In the Epistle to the Romans, the doctrine of justification without works is presented with great force and fulness as a general proposition. In that to the Galatians, we have the apostolic treatment and disposal in a specific case of a claim put in, for one virtue at least, to a share in the office of buildiug up a meritorious righteousness before God —so as that consideration and a place might be given to it, however small or subordinate it may be, in the title-deed of Christians to the Jerusalem above. This was the solitary rite of circumcision —the main observance, if not the all, which the Jews contended for. To whom Paul would not give way, no not for an instant; but withstood to the face, in the spirit and with the determination of a mortal warfare—as if a question of life or death to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so he fought with all his might against it, giving no quarter—for he saw the evil of it in its full extent —That it would make the cross of none effect; and revive the bondage of other days; and reinstate the

whole law, with its unsatisfied demands and unappeased terrors, over the consciences of men—so as to substitute the obedience, either of slavish dread or of a lifeless form, for the free and grateful and confiding services of the gospel. We cannot but admire the exquisite wisdom of thus keeping the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God intact and inviolable; nor let us wonder at the intense earnestness of Paul, when, in every form of strenuous asseveration, he maintains the doctrine of justification, not by faith, but by faith *alone*—as being the only solid foundation of peace, the only outlet and incentive to virtue along the career of a progressive holiness.

Ver. 7. 'What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.' The same apostle who tells the primary cause of the difference between Jews and Gentiles, by tracing it upward to the predestination of God, also tells us the proximate cause of this difference in the practice of men. Israel did not obtain that which he sought for, because he sought it wrongly, that is, by the works of the law instead of faith. Only they of the election obtained it, and why?—for the primary does not supersede the proximate—because they sought it rightly. Yet he recurs again from the part which men had in it to the part which God had in it, when in the last clause of this verse, taken along with a few succeeding verses, he tells us that 'the rest were blinded.'

Ver. 8–10. '(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not

hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.' One might imagine that on the back of the assertion in the last clause, even that the rest were blinded—the question might be put, Who blinded them? and the answer be given in the verses now placed before you. We are sensible that this would be felt by many as a harsh and injurious representation of the Deity; and we are also aware of the softening expedients which have been resorted to, in order to mitigate or do it away. For this purpose ingenious men have drawn upon the hypothesis, that like as all matter is essentially at rest[1] till put in motion by an external cause—so every created being, though endowed with both moral and intellectual capacities, is essentially devoid[2] of all spiritual light or spiritual goodness, till these are communicated by Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift. It is thus that they would repel the charge of God being the author of sin, by denying that God makes men sin—for that He only withholds the grace which would make them righteous. And in like manner would they deny that God blinds the eyes of any, but that He only withholds the light which would make them see—insomuch that He is no more the author of spiritual, than the sun is the author or fountain-head of material darkness. And so they view the matter thus—That all which is evil springs from the creature or from beneath, but all which is posi-

[1] By its *vis inertiæ*.

[2] By the essential defectibility of the creature.

tively good from the Creator—He often leaving men to themselves, but never putting Himself forth or operating efficiently upon them, save for the purpose of illuminating or making them holy.

Now for ourselves we feel it not necessary, either to adopt this hypothesis or decisively to reject it. For aught we know, there may be—grounded on some deep-hid physical necessity, which we are not in circumstances either to affirm or deny—be that essential defectibility in every created thing which the schoolmen tell us of; and if so, it looks a plausible conclusion that all the direct moral influences put forth by God upon His creatures are on the side of what is good,—while all the evil which they exhibit is not worked in them by the Divinity, but only left to its own working, as it comes inherently and properly from themselves. We have no quarrel with this argument—for though not convinced by it, neither do we feel ourselves able to overturn it; and so long as it remains a plausibility which infidels cannot dispose of, then it rests on at least as good a footing as their own objection; and both therefore—both the hostile consideration of religion's enemy, and the defensive consideration of its friend—may be kept alike at abeyance. It is thus that we are sometimes led to look with indulgence on this one and that other scholastic ingenuity, conjured up for the protection of the faith—for though not in itself absolutely proved, yet, if incapable of being disproved, it may at least neutralise many an objection, intended by their authors as so many deadly thrusts at the Christian revelation—a revelation which stands secure on the basis

of its own evidences, amid the conflicting and sometimes alike shadowy speculations both of its friends and its adversaries. But as we said before, for our own satisfaction these conjectural theories are in no demand with us; and though with some minds they should serve for the removal of stumbling-blocks at which they might otherwise have fallen, yet for ourselves we can take these verses as they stand, and in their obvious meaning too—a meaning all too plain to require the exposition of them. We expect enigmas in theology as well as in nature; and as in the one department, we do not permit them to overbear the manifestation of the senses—so in the other, they ought not to overbear either the lights of history in favour of the Bible, or the manifestation of its truth unto our consciences.

And yet in these verses, hopelessly recondite and intractable as they might appear, we can read a lesson of signal value in practical religion. Even in philosophy, with the objects which we most familiarly handle, and the processes which pass most currently before our eyes, we are soon baffled and get beyond our soundings, when we attempt to trace present appearances into the past, though but a few steps back among the depths of causation. Let us not wonder then, if we should find it to be the same in the spiritual processes of Christianity; or if there should be a distinction here too between things present, which we know how to deal with, and things remote, which elude our every effort to grasp or comprehend them. This is remarkably exemplified in the subject-matter of the passage now before us. We can say little or nothing of

anterior, and especially of first movements—just as little in fact as we can clear our way upward to the electing grace of God. And yet we can see thoroughly to the movements in hand, and wherewith we have most emphatically and most urgently to do. If we indulge in listless and spiritual sloth about the high matters of our salvation, God will give us the spirit of slumber. If we refuse to look with our eyes, God will take away that which we have, and so darken our eyes that we cannot see. If we hearken not diligently now at the call of principle, the conscience within will afterwards emit a feebler voice; and even the loudest remonstrances from without of the word and the preacher, may, in the growing obtuseness of faculties that we will not exercise, be altogether unheeded by the moral ear. If the store of comforts wherewith Providence has blest us, prove but a snare and a provocative to our unbridled appetites—these too will be made to war against our souls. In short, by that economy of grace under which we sit, there may be an ever-growing blindness and ever-growing hardness, which follow judicially in the train of guilty indulgences; and, on the other hand, let the most be made of the light and the strength we at present have—and then, in the order of God's administration, or on the principle of the Holy Ghost being given to those who obey Him, this will be followed up by a supply of larger powers and larger manifestations. Here then is a view of these particular Scriptures now before us, eminently subservient to the business of our discipleship as Christians; and, whatever obscurity may rest on

the initial steps of this process—it is surely our part, among the actual steps of it in which we are now implicated, if we cannot solve the difficulties of the past, at least to busy ourselves with all diligence in the duties of the present—That is to awaken from our lethargies, and Christ will give us light; to order our conversation aright, and God will show us His salvation.[1] These are the matters on hand wherewith we plainly have to do; and even the history of the Jews may be turned to the practical account which we are now making of them. For though the primary cause of their being cast off may be traced upward to a decree of election (ver. 5), its proximate cause was their own misconduct. Their personal rejection by God came on the back of their own rejection of the Saviour. They had withstood His miracles. They had turned a deaf ear to all His invitations. They had shut their eyes and steeled their consciences against such evidences of His mission as ought to have overpowered them; and the effect was, that it just hardened and blinded them the more—Insomuch that in the view of their approaching desolation, when the pitying Saviour wept over them, He pronounced as the final result of their impenitency in not minding the things which belonged to their peace—that now they were hid from their eyes. Well then did the apostle supplement the quotations from writers of an ancient period, by a clause which applied their description to the Jews of his own time—'Unto this day.'

[1] Ephesians, v, 14; and Psalm l, 23.

LECTURE LXXXV.

ROMANS, xi, 11—32.

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office; if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches: but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

One of Paul's maxims was, that, for the sake of the gospel, he should be all things to all men; and, more especially, that to the Jews he should be as a Jew. No one could practise with greater skill or delicacy than he did, the art of conciliating those whom he addressed—though, of course, he carried this only so far as truth and principle would let him. Nothing could be more sturdy and determined than his resistance, as we may see in his whole Epistle

to the Galatians, when any great or cardinal doctrine of the gospel was trenched upon, though by ever so little. Yet when it possibly could be avoided, none more sensitively fearful of giving offence than he was; and when unavoidable, which it very generally was, he was always at the greatest pains to soften it to the uttermost. Even in the verses which we have just quitted, and in which he had to pronounce an awful sentence of abandonment and utter degradation upon his countrymen the Jews, still he does it as a Jew—interposing their own writers as a sort of screen between him and them; and, as if more effectually to secure their conviction though not their acquiescence and consent, speaking to them not in his own person, but in the persons of their most revered prophets and holy men of old. And in the succeeding verses we can very obviously see, with what congeniality, as if to redeem and compensate the severities which he had just uttered, he breaks forth on the coming enlargement of the children of Israel; and with what exquisite wisdom he manages, if I may so speak, between them and the Gentiles, with both of whom he at the time is jointly holding converse—claiming kindred with the one because of his office, and with the other because of his relationship. In short, unlike to the polemics of our modern day, and yet as uncompromising and bold as any of them—whenever an agreeable thing can be said, he says it—So that while, in truth and substance, he had the stern integrity of an old prophet when dealing with principles—he, in manner, had the pliancy and nice perception of an accomplished courtier when deal-

ing with persons—and all this for the sake of the gospel, all for the purpose of gaining some.

Ver. 11. 'I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.' And so in this verse he hastens to inform them, and that with all promptitude and decision, that theirs was but a temporary stumble—what the stumbling-block was he had before told them [1]—not an irrecoverable fall. After laying his rebuke on the perversities of men, he looks onward with the eye of a prophet to the yet unfulfilled purposes of God, in whose hand men are but the instruments of His policy; and who causes even their very sins redound to His own glory, and subserve the accomplishment of all His pleasure. When as a preacher he views them morally, he connects these sins with the wickedness of man—When as a prophet he views them historically, (for prophecy is but history in anticipation, or the history of the future,) he looks to them in connection with the sovereign power of God—first put forth at election by Him who ordains all, afterwards carried into effect by Him who worketh all in all throughout the successions of nature and providence. One of these successions he distinctly announces in the verse now before us, when he affirms the fall of the Jews to have been the salvation of the Gentiles—as if these two events stood related to each other in the way of cause and effect, or of antecedent and consequent. The same connection he reasserts several times in certain clauses of the verses which

[1] Romans, ix, 32; x, 3.

follow, and which we may now single out, and thus save the necessity of our again adverting to them —as in the 12th verse, where we are told that the fall of the Jews was the riches of the world, and the diminution of them the riches of the Gentiles; and in the 15th verse, where we read that the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world; and in the 28th verse, where we learn, that by their treatment of the gospel they became the enemies of God for the sake of the Gentiles, to whose benefit therefore this rejection of the Jews was in some way subservient; and finally, in the 30th verse, which gives us expressly to understand, that through the unbelief of the Jews mercy was obtained by the Gentiles—All suggesting the idea of a metaphysical sequence, or of a connection between these two events in the order of cause and consequence; and this again has set curiosity on edge to discover what the ligament could be which so bound together the infidelity of the Jews with the faith of the Gentiles, or what the operating influences were in the first which could bring the second in its train.

Now if God affirm that the two are thus linked together, it is our part so to believe it, whether all the cementing links and influences have or have not been submitted to our observation. We hold it the more necessary to premise this, because we think that with all men's powers of exploration, they have not been able thoroughly to unravel the process which intervenes between the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, and either the diffusion or acceptance of the same gospel among the other nations of the earth. It may have been partially but

not fully explained, either in regard to the efficient or the final causes which are concerned in it—so that it remains in great part still a mystery in the counsels of God, of which the most we have to say is, that such is the will and the appointment of Him our Almighty Sovereign. "We must not expect, that, at least in our present state, we shall ever so master the philosophy of the question, as to leave no room for the exclamation of the apostle, O the depth and unsearchableness of God's judgments, and how past finding out! Yet let us not forget that, in the language of Job, there are parts of His ways which do lie open to our observation, though it be indeed a little portion that we know of Him. And of His ways as of His works, it is well that they should be sought out of all them who have pleasure therein[1]—as far as they are shone upon by the lights, whether of Scripture or of experience. Let us attend then a little to what these enquirers have got to say about this question, and what the fruit of the consideration which they have bestowed on it. There are certain palpable things which lie on the surface, as it were, of this hidden mystery; and which it were quite legitimate to notice.

Had Christianity been received by the great bulk of the Jewish nation, and had they in consequence been animated by that spirit of proselytism which essentially characterised it—a spirit heretofore new to them, though under its influence now they might have laboured for the diffusion of their new faith over the whole earth—still it might well be imagined, that coming as it would with one mind and

[1] Psalm cxi, 2.

by one effort, from the whole people, it was but a development of their old Judaism, still unchanged, or changed only in this, that, whereas it used to be tolerant though unsocial, it had now become restless and aggressive,—making inroads on all other countries which they had hitherto let alone. It might have been most plausibly conceived, that such a national enterprise, sanctioned by all the authorities of their state, as well as by the enthusiasm of a unanimous population, would have provoked a national resistance every where; and far more readily awakened the suspicion of those ambitious designs, which would array every community whom they invaded, in an attitude of all the more resolute and prepared hostility against them. Nothing, it might with all seeming fairness be reasoned, nothing could more effectually disarm this adverse imagination, than that the new religion should be carried abroad by a few persecuted outcasts, whom the Jews as a nation had disowned—a better vehicle surely for a religion which was to owe all its triumphs to the unaided force of principle and truth over the consciences of men. It was thus in fact that it first made way upon the earth—protected for a time, rather than withstood by the Roman authorities; and certainly not calling forth the whole power of the empire against it, till it had acquired a magnitude which alarmed the civil magistrate for the safety of existing institutions, but not at the same time till it had acquired a strength which weathered and survived all his efforts for its extermination. And as this great national resistance of the Jews, with the consequent dispersion

over all countries both of Jews and Christians, acted most powerfully as second causes for the propagation of Christianity at its outset in the world —So it has further been contended, that to us who look retrospectively on past ages, the evidence for the truth of our religion is thereby presented in a far more impressive form than it would otherwise have been—the testimony of its first disciples being thus far more decisively tried and found to be of purest stamp and quality, when thus delivered and thus persevered in before the presence of these resolute and implacable adversaries, who yet could not overthrow it; but who rather have contributed and that mightily to its strength, both as the depositaries, and the unexceptionable, because hostile witnesses for the elder Scriptures of our faith, and so for all the corroborative argument, whether of doctrine or of prophecy, that is contained in them. And certain it is, that we have an evidence before our eyes in the present state of the Jews, which, but for their unbelief persisted in for so many centuries, we could not have appealed to—the evidence of their singular preservation, unprecedented in all other history; and bespeaking the special providence of God, both in upholding this wonderful people as a remnant of former revelations, and in reserving them for fulfilments and further evolutions in the scheme of the Divine administration which are yet to come. Altogether it is a phenomenon charged with argument on the side of Christianity; and having in it all the power of a living voice, to rebuke, if not the infidelity, at least the neglect and heedlessness of those who look on the Bible and all its revelations, as a thing of nought.

Such are some of the explanations which might be given for the actual footsteps of the Divine procedure, in thus regulating the advances of Christianity throughout the world. Nor does it hinder but that they might be sound and good explanations, although they very much proceed on the natural influence of circumstances, as they were brought to bear upon human nature, such as it is. For though it lies within the power of God to overrule all the ordinary influences for the furtherance of His designs—yet we know it to be the general policy of His administration that He should be exceedingly sparing of any conflict with, or that there should be an exceeding rarity of deviations from, the laws and the regular processes which He Himself has established; and so with the exception of a few select miracles to accredit His various revelations, it seems the rule of the Almighty's government, that its purposes shall be carried into effect in the uniform course of things, and not by a series of violations upon that uniformity. And thus it is that it comes within the philosophy of history to assign what the connections and methods were, by which the unbelief of the Jews opened a way for the gospel, and so as to speed its progress and acceptance among all other nations. But yet though in this way we may have a deal of valid and satisfactory reasoning on the relation or the subserviency of one event to another, under our existing economy of moral and physical causes—there remains unresolved, and we think in our present state unresolvable, the transcendental question, Why such an œconomy was instituted, so as to necessitate evil

that good might follow, and so as to postpone for many centuries and generations the reign of universal virtue and happiness in the world. It is well for man to be made sensible of the limit within which his faculties are beset and encompassed; and so as to acknowledge, with all his certainty of a thing that *so* it is, his own profound ignorance of *how* it is. Let our attempts then be successful as they may, to explain the actings and reactings of Jewish infidelity and Gentile faith upon each other, they must carry us at last to the inscrutable will of God; nor do they supersede that apostolic reflection which follows, and which we again anticipate, of "O how unsearchable his judgments, and his ways past finding out!". Yet with all this sense of a present darkness and a present difficulty, it is our unbroken confidence, that what we know not now we shall know afterwards; when we join in the triumphant song of eternity, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

'For to provoke them to jealousy.' But however unable to make out the whole meaning and mystery of this procedure by reasons of our own, yet when Scripture condescends to give a reason, we may adopt it with all safety, as part at least, if not the whole of the explanation. The effect stated in this verse was predicted by Moses many centuries before (x, 19). The calling of the Gentiles tended to provoke the Jews to jealousy or emulation; and the use of this, we are told by the apostle in the 14th verse, was, that it 'might save some of them.' And in future verses of this chapter the

same thing is hinted at, as in verse 26th, where, after mention has been made of the fulness of the Gentiles to come in, it is represented that *so* all Israel shall be saved; and in verses 30th and 31st, where it is intimated, that in like manner as the unbelief of the Jews was the medium through which mercy comes to the Gentiles, so the mercy shown to the Gentiles was afterwards the medium through which mercy should come to the Jews—And the impellent cause for this result we gather from the clause now before us, even that the sight of Gentile Christianity had in it something which moved a desire on the part of the Jews after, and so as to turn them to the faith—when no longer biding in unbelief, they shall be again graffed into their own olive tree. (Ver. 23.)

We cannot say that we have seen much yet of the distinct operation of this motive among the children of Israel. Indeed there has been little hitherto of conversion to Christianity from among the Jews, when compared with the whole bulk and body of the people; but even in the individual cases of such conversion, we are not aware that the principle adverted to in the text has had much of an efficient or actuating influence, for bringing about this change from one religion to another. Before we could affirm this, we should require to know more the history of particular conversions, and have greater access to the minds of those who have undergone the transition, than we have had the privilege of enjoying. We cannot therefore say in how far the observation of Gentile Christianity, and of its good effects on those who had embraced it,

has acted as a provocative on the Jewish mind, and impelled to such efforts and enquiries as may have led in more or fewer instances to the faith of the gospel. But as the great national conversion is yet to come—so we can anticipate how the motive specified in our text might gather strength with the lapse of time and in the course of successive generations. In the first place, their own hopes of the Messiah on whom they still calculate as a Prince and Deliverer yet to come, other than Jesus Christ the only Son of God, must every year become more languid; and at length, we should imagine, when all the periods of their computation have run out, must finally expire. And in the second place, it lies with us to fulfil the part which is here assigned to the Gentiles. We should make Christianity the object of emulation and desire to the Jews and to all others, by our exemplification of it. Let us not wonder that this influence has hitherto come so little into play. This is not altogether owing to Jewish insensibility. The failure is ours—at least as much, if not more, than theirs. If their minds have not been excited to an attention or a respect or a longing after Christianity, it is because we have done so little, or done nothing at all, to excite them. The light of our religion has not so shone upon them, as to make it glorious in their eyes. It may have told in the first ages, when the very heathen could exclaim, "Behold these Christians how they love each other. But it ought to be no surprise to us, that, when Christianity declined, this moral force, which the apostle ascribes to it, should decline also—so that men would cease

either to imitate or admire it. This its constraining and attracting power is obviously discernible in apostolic times, as may be gathered from distinct and repeated traces in the book of Acts;[1] and perhaps for a century or two it may not have altogether expired. But we are not to marvel that we so entirely lose signt of it in the miserable degeneracies which followed—as in the middle ages, when, instead of their examples or their guides, Christians became their fierce and contemptuous persecutors; or even in the present times, when such a wretchedly inadequate exhibition is still made, either of the virtues of the gospel or of its consequent effect on the peace and prosperity of men. We have indeed a mighty distance and declension to recover, ere we can make the Jews emulous to be what Christians are—whether by an exhibition of the grace and beauty which our faith imparts to the character of its individual professors, or of its beneficial influences on the well-being of society. Were they made distinctly to see what Christianity does for the virtue and happiness of men, we can understand how the principle of the text might, even at this day, come into powerful operation. But as it is, the sad imperfection of Gentile Christianity operates as a barrier in the way of Jewish conversion.

It is this which makes the task of a Christian missionary among the Jews all the more arduous; and lays an awful responsibility on us, if, instead of being instruments for the furtherance of the great design unfolded in this passage, by adorning the

[1] Acts, ii, 47; iv, 21; v, 13, 14, 26; vi, 7.

doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, we shall, by an opposite conduct, inflict a discredit and injury on the religion which we profess, and so as to hinder its progress in the world. We are here distinctly told by what sort of efficacy it is, that the disciples of our faith, in the very act of being its patterns, might become its propagators among God's ancient people—even by the exhibition of its virtues, and so of the health and melody which dwell in the habitations of the righteous. Some devoted men there have been, the apostles of our modern day, who, single-handed, and with the force of the Christian argument seconded by the demonstration of their own example, have, through the grace of God, effected genuine conversions here and there among the children of Israel. They have been the instruments of 'saving some,' (ver. 14). But ere a general effect can be anticipated from this cause, there must be a far more general representation of the worth of Christianity—and that both in its family and social pictures, as well as in those occasional specimens which one person has given after another of its ennobling and beautifying influences on the characters of men. If we would be fellow-workers with God in His great and gracious designs for the recovery of the whole earth; and if we would not, as far as in us lies, incur the guilt of frustrating the objects of His Divine administration—it mightily concerns us how we should comport ourselves before the eyes of this select and peculiar nation, whom the Father of the human family at one time separated from all the people of the world, and for whom the highest moral destinies

are yet in reserve. If it be through our mercy that they are to obtain mercy let us remember that it is a mercy which saves us by the washing of regeneration;[1] and that the graces of this regeneration must appear palpably and convincingly before their view, ere we can expect that we shall win them either to the love or admiration of the gospel. Did they but see the evidence of God being in the midst of us, whether in our preparation for the life that is to come, or in the promise which never fails to go along with these of the life that now is—did they but witness in bright exemplification on our persons the virtues of our holy religion, its exalted faith, its heaven-born charity, its unwearied patience under calumnies, its ethereal sanctity, and withal its gentleness of spirit and tenderness for every thing which breathes—did they but observe the effect of these, not merely in gracing the individual possessor, but in upholding the spectacle of peaceful and well-ordered homes, of happy and harmonious neighbourhoods in every territory which Christianity blest and enlightened by its presence —Did all this stand forth in manifest and undeniable contrast with the selfishness and impiety and moral degradation of their own acquaintances, the men of their own kindred—then should we be at no loss to understand, how it is that Gentiles might provoke Jews to jealousy and emulation; and what the process was by which, through the mercy bestowed on the former, mercy at length accrued to the latter also.

Such then is our part in this scheme of moral

[1] Titus, iii, 5.

government, and such the mighty importance of our right bearing toward the Jews. We have a task and a duty laid upon us for the fulfilment of their restoration; and, accordingly, the rest of the passage now on hand is mainly taken up with the manner in which we Gentiles ought to comport ourselves towards them. We shall therefore close our observations on the verses or clauses of verses which remain, by briefly noticing the points and proprieties of our incumbent conduct to the now scattered tribes of Israel.

No wonder then that the conversion of the Jews should all this while have been at a stand, when our treatment of them has for so many a long century been utterly and diametrically the reverse of that which the apostle here prescribes to us. Verily if the times once were, when the Jews looked with intolerance and disdain on all the world besides, this has been amply repaid by the wholesale contempt and contumely which these outcast people have since received at the hands of all the nations. Truly we are in fault in having thus made them a reproach and a by-word over the whole earth; and though the part we have acted be the fulfilment of a prophecy, this for us is no extenuation—any more than for the murderers of our Saviour, in that with wicked hands they did that which God had predetermined should be done. It would have been more godlike, had we held them beloved for their fathers' sakes, (ver. 28). The sacredness of their origin might well have given them some place of sacredness in our consideration. The descendants of such ancestors should have been honoured be-

cause of them—for, 'if the root be holy, so are the branches,' (ver. 16). So ought this latter clause of the verse to be understood—while as to the former clause, 'If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy'—we incline to the view of those who regard the first-fruits as the first Jewish converts to the faith—to whom the apostle appeals as proof, because samples of the capabilities of the whole nation for readmission to the great spiritual family. Nay he argues for their greater capability, (ver. 24)—Seeing that they were the natural, and we only the exotic branches of the olive tree which now bears us, (ver. 17)—they being by descent, and we by faith the children of Abraham, who is the father of the faithful, and from whom our Saviour, the Son of David according to the flesh, came. We are therefore told to boast not against the branches, (ver. 18)—more kindred than we are to the root which bears us; and which, though for a time broken off, will at length be graffed in again. Our part meanwhile is to be more lowly and diffident of ourselves, and more reverential of the Jews—'Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.'

Ver. 19–22. 'Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.' These verses are instinct with princi-

ple, the full exposition and enforcement of which would require a succession of sermons. We shall but state the leading ideas which they are fitted to suggest. This passage altogether is an argument by which the apostle would repress the arrogance of the Gentiles, because they now occupied the place which the Jews before monopolized; and what, with this view, he presses on their attention, is the tenure of that occupancy which they now gloried in—a tenure, the due consideration of which would annihilate all boasting, and lead them to carry with all humility and meekness the privileges wherewith they were invested. They held them altogether on the footing, not of their own merits, but of another's goodness—and which goodness they can only continue in by the respect and reference of their minds towards it—for without such respect or reference there can be no faith, and it is by faith we stand. The whole distinction, whether of superior happiness or superior honour, conferred on us by the gospel, is exclusively and altogether of grace—not a thing worked for, but a thing given: And the precise office of faith is to receive it on this footing, to see and acknowledge it as a gift, and to depend for it on the truth and liberality and withal power of the Giver; trusting that what He had promised, He was able and also willing to perform (iv, 21). It is thus that faith essentially carries one out of himself, and by its very nature must, at every moment of its exercise, accredit another with the blessings which itself cannot earn, but only can appropriate as the fruit of a generosity from without. It is thus that faith necessarily excludes boasting, as much so as

one antagonist principle must displace and exterminate the other which is opposed to it.[1] And thus also nothing could be more pertinently adduced to restrain the boasting of the Gentiles against the Jews —'against the branches'—than the consideration that themselves were standing only by faith, and that therefore they should not be high-minded, but fear.

But how, it may be asked, can faith and fear exist contemporaneously in the same bosom? Is not the one fitted to supplant the other? Is not faith or confidence allied with courage, rather than with timidity or terror? Does not faith work by love, and is it not said of perfect love that it casteth out fear? What then can be the object of the fear in my text?—a fear, it seems, which might co-exist with faith—for while the apostle tells these Gentiles that they cay only stand by faith, he bids them at the same time not to be high-minded, but fear.

To these questions a reply might be given from two contiguous verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews —the last verse of the third, and the first verse of the fourth chapter. The Israelites were kept out of their promised land because of unbelief; and let us therefore fear that we, for the same reason, shall fall short of our promised land. The fear is lest we fall away from the faith, lest we lose sight of its unseen objects, and so by an evil heart of unbelief depart from the living God. Nature is prone to forget the things of faith, and to lose all sight or sense of these in the objects of vision; and therefore is required to give earnest heed to these things, for fear she at any time should let them slip.[2] The

[1] Romans, iii, 27; Ephesians, ii, 8, 9. [2] Hebrews, ii, 1.

man who unable to swim, has fallen among the waves and had a rope thrown out to him, would know what it is to have faith and fear in contemporaneous operation within his heart: and in very proportion to his fearful distrust of himself, would he cling to the support that had been extended to him from above. The child who is beginning to walk, alike distrustful of his own strength, keeps firm hold on the nurse who leads him; and his faith and fear, so far from conflicting forces, work most harmoniously into each other's hands. And so the Christian, aware of there being no sufficiency in himself to withstand the temptations of an evil world, keeps fast and firm hold of that grace and sufficiency which he knows to be in God; and so the moral dynamics of the gospel will be found in perfect keeping with the machinery of the human constitution, with the laws and the working of man's moral nature.

The goodness and the severity of God, as brought into juxtaposition in the 22nd verse; would require a treatment which we forego for the present, and more especially as we have made it the subject of a distinct sermon.[1] We recur to the apostle's argument respecting the Jews.

[1] Sermon XVI, in vol. i of my 'Congregational Sermons,' being vol. viii of the Series.

LECTURE LXXXVI.

ROMANS, xi, 23—32.

"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree! For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

THE general injunction to missionary work is comprehensive of Jews as well as Gentiles—"Go preach the *gospel to every creature.*" But the duty of labouring for the conversion of God's ancient people is furthermore laid on a distinct and special ground of its own. All that is said of them in Scripture serves to enhance the obligation of attempting, in every possible way, to find access among them for the doctrines and dispensation of the New Testament. This is an employment whereof we are told that the good of it will come back with double interest upon ourselves. Or rather, and

without putting it into this selfish form, we learn from the Bible that the Christianity of the Jews will be followed up by a mighty enlargement in the character and state of Christianity throughout the world—so that in labouring for this, we become in a peculiar manner the fellow-workers of God, and instruments in His hand, for prosecuting and carrying forward to its fulfilment one of the highest objects of His administration. It were the most germinant of all our missionary enterprises—or the one most prolific of a rich moral blessing to the great family of mankind. The full return of the Jews will be the riches, we are told, of all other nations (ver. 12); and by entering therefore on this peculiar walk, we may well be said to enter on the highest department of missionary labour, and in which we most harmonise both with the designs of Providence and the schemes of prophecy. The procedure of the first apostles in this respect might serve perhaps as a model for the apostolical work of our present day. They carried forth the gospel to all nations—yet beginning at Jerusalem. And into whatever city they entered, it was their general practice first to seek out the Jews—entering into their synagogues, and reasoning first with them out of their Scriptures.[1] And when Paul arrived a prisoner at Rome, the first thing he did was to send for the Jews. They seem still to have acted in the spirit of that charge which our Saviour while on earth gave to His disciples, when He bade them go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Nay the apostles expressly alleged a necessity for

[1] Acts, xiii, 14; xiv, 1; xvii, 1, 2; xviii, 4, 5.

this order—even that the word of God should first be spoken to the Jews before they turned to the Gentiles.[1] At that time the unbelief of the Jews was a stepping-stone to the faith of the Gentiles; and by their being first preached to, this unbelief came into open manifestation—which both served as an intimation for the apostles to desist, and seems not to have been without its influence on the new hearers to whom they then turned themselves.[2] But this period of Jewish unbelief is now drawing to a close; and by a sort of reverse law, it is the faith of that people which will now be the stepping-stone to a great and general expansion of Christianity among men. Surely then when the conversion of the Jews is so much more hopeful, the duty of preaching to them is not less imperative and at least greatly more attractive than before—and especially now that the ulterior good is arrived at by a medium so much more bright and beautiful, than that through which the first teachers of Christianity had to find their way ere they came into contact with the Gentiles. Theirs was a rugged path, from the rejection of the gospel by their own countrymen, to the proclamation of it over a world where it was yet unknown—Ours, on the other hand, we should feel an inviting path, from the reception of this same gospel by the children of Israel, to the spread and the revival of it among all nations. It is such a receiving as will be life from the dead (ver. 15). Under all the views of it, the evangelisation of the Jews should rank as a first and foremost object of Christian policy.

[1] Acts, xiii, 46; xviii, 6. [2] Acts, xiii, 48.

And here it occurs to us, that the exceeding rarity as yet of Jewish conversion, so far from a reason for despairing of future success, should, if taken in connection with the whole history of the case, lead rather to an opposite conclusion. It is through our mercy that they at length are to obtain mercy—or through the medium of Gentile Christianity, that the light of the gospel is to find entry into the hearts and understandings of this ancient people of God. We, whether by our example or our exertions or both, are, somehow or other, to be the instruments of effecting this mighty change in the Jewish mind; and the question is,—how have we acquitted ourselves in this capacity—or what has hitherto been our treatment of those, who have been thus devolved on our custody and care, and of whom we may be said especially to have been put in charge? Looking then to this matter generally and historically through a succession of ages, we find this treatment to have been the very opposite of that which is here prescribed to us; and that, speaking in the gross, we have not only neglected the apostolic rule, but have actually reversed it—So that, instead of warming these outcasts of the Almighty's displeasure by our kindness, or conciliating them by our respect, or inspiring them with confidence by our justice, or awakening their admiration of the gospel by our exemplification of its virtues and graces—we, in the great bulk and majority of our proceedings, have brought all the opposite influences to bear upon them, and done every thing we could to alienate and repel and put them to an impracticable distance away from us—

Acting the tyrants and persecutors of a forlorn race, who have become the veriest abjects or offscourings of humanity in our hands. We know that at length their heart is to turn[1] to the Lord, when they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as for a first-born. But to hasten onward this consummation, we should turn from the evil of our way towards them, and mourn over all the insults and the wrongs which for two thousand years have been heaped on this people of noble ancestry and of still nobler destination. It might be looked on as a strange inference to draw from our almost total want of success hitherto—that on this retrospect of Jewish obstinacy and hatred of the gospel for so many ages, we should ground the bright and hopeful anticipation, not of a few individual conversions as heretofore, but of their national return to Him who is the Hope and Saviour of all the ends of the earth. But the inference is more sound and legitimate than it may be at first taken for. We count on this change of result in the Jewish mind, because we perceive a change in the causality which is being brought to bear upon it. On looking back to the sullen inveteracy of Jewish prejudice for so many ages, we cannot but observe that the instrumentality wherewith it has been plied is not only not the same, but the very opposite to that which the apostle would have put into our hands—whereas on looking forward, we can perceive that a reverse influence is to be put in operation; nor can we deem the conclusion to be illogical, when we reckon on the effect being different just from the cause being different. It is like the promise of a

[1] 2 Corinthians, iii, 16.

first and hopeful experiment, and to which we address ourselves with all the greater confidence, that, instead of some gratuitous or hap-hazard trial in the hands of a projector, the very means are to be now set agoing, which are not only most fitted by nature to soften and disarm the antipathies of the human spirit, but which have been expressly sanctioned and enjoined in the oracles of a wisdom that is infallible. We speak not of the modern liberalism which but ministers to the secular pride and interest of this nation of aliens; and seeks for nothing further than their admission into courts and parliaments. We speak of the unutterable missionary longings now felt on their behalf; and of the efforts now making, not by single adventurers only, but by societies and whole churches, to recall these hapless wanderers, and entreat them by every moving argument to come within the limits, and be honoured as at once the highest ornaments and best-loved inmates of the spiritual family of God. There is doubtless a wide contrast, between our hopes of the future and our recollections of the past —but not wider than the contrast between our haughty, injurious, and oppressive treatment of the Jews then; and the meekness, the gentleness, the perfect frankness and sincerity, the heart-breathing desires after their salvation, the earnest and affectionate persuasion, the unwearied, we hope the unconquerable kindness wherewith they will now continue to be assailed, in the face, it may be, of discouragements and insults—All to tell at length, we trust, with the omnipotence of Christian charity giving forth the authentic exhibition of herself in

the whole bearing and demeanour of the men who thus long and thus labour, not perhaps for their civil immunities and privileges, but for the glories of a higher citizenship, for their readmittance to the household of God, as the great and one thing needful—mightily to be striven, and mightily to be prayed for.

Thus as the apostacy of the Jews led to the calling of the Gentiles; so will the Christianity of the Gentiles, when fully and consistently proceeded on, lead onward to the effectual recalling of the Jews. But the succession of benefits and blessings will not stop here—for, by a further step in the progress, will this conversion of God's ancient people to the truth as it is in Jesus operate by a mighty reaction, in the further extension and establishment of the gospel throughout the world. We have the traces, nay the distinct intimations of this, in more than one clause of the passage now before us—as in verse 12th, where we are told that the fulness of the Jews will augment the riches of the Gentiles; and in verse 15, that, the receiving of them will be life from the dead. We gather the same information from other Scriptures both of the Old and the New Testament—as when Isaiah tells us (lx, 3), that "the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising;" and that the abundance of the sea, and the forces of the Gentiles shall be converted and come unto Israel (lx, 5)—whose seed shall be known among the Gentiles; and all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which God hath blessed (lxi, 9); for then will the Gentiles see their righteousness, and

all kings their glory (lxii, 2). This reflex influence, if it may be so termed, of Jewish upon Gentile Christianity, is still further intimated by the Psalmist as follows—"Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion," and "*so* the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory."[1] Hear also the prophet Jeremiah—"I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first, and cleanse them from all their iniquity: And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, *which shall hear all the good that I do unto them.*"[2] That the fulfilment of these prophecies is still to come, we may well conjecture from such passages as Isaiah, xliii, 18, 19; Jeremiah, xvi, 14, 15; xxiii, 7, 8. But the conjecture advances to a certainty, by the quotation of the apostle in Romans, xi, 26—where he looks onward to the accomplishment as yet future of the glorious prediction of Isaiah in lix, 20—"And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob"—the undoubted reference of Paul, when he alludes to it as a thing *written*, that "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

We have already tried in some slight degree, to explain how it was, or what the connecting influences were, by which Gentile Christianity followed in the train of Jewish unbelief; and again, we have also said a little on the operation which this Gentile Christianity, when rightly exercised and fully

[1] Psalm cii, 13, 15. [2] Jeremiah, xxxiii, 7, 9.

manifested, should have, in opening the eyes of the Jews, and so turning them to the faith. But there is still a third sequence in this progression of moral changes, whereof prophecy tells us that so it will be; and the curiosity of man prompts him, as in the other cases, to enquire, how it will be? And here too, we can to a certain extent meet the enquiry—for it appears pretty obvious, that a great national movement towards Christianity on the part of the Jews, and their actual adoption of a faith which they have so long held in detestation, must tell with mighty and decisive effect on the rest of the world. If the very existence of the Jews as a separate people be in itself the indication of a providence—a singular event in history, which demonstrates the part taken by Him who overrules all history in the affairs of men—how much more impressive will the evidence become, when this same people shall describe the actual evolution, which it was predicted they should do, more than two thousand years ago; shall, after the dispersions and the desolations of many generations, reach at last the very landing-place, to which the finger of prophecy has been pointing from an antiquity so high as that of the patriarchal ages. We know not if this splendid era is to be ushered in by palpable and direct miracle. We would not affirm this, but far less can we deny it. But should there be no such manifestation of the Divine power conjoined with this marvellous fulfilment, there will at least be such a manifestation of the Divine knowledge, as will incontestably prove that God has had to do with it; and so as that history shall of itself per-

form the office of revelation, or men will trace the finger of the Almighty in the events which are sensibly passing before their eyes. And besides, we have reason to believe of these converted Jews, that they will become the most zealous and successful of all missionaries; or, like Paul before them, the preachers of that faith which they persecuted in times past, and once laboured to destroy.[1] It is said of a single Christian that he may be the light of the world.[2] How much more will be a whole nation of Christians—glowing in the full ardour of their new-born convictions with apostolic fervour; and the very fruit of whose conversion will tell with a hundred-fold greater effect than even that of St. Paul, as a testimony or evidence for the faith. Verily like him, their great prototype, they will pre-eminently and emphatically be the apostles of the Gentiles; and there will be a light to lighten these Gentiles, in the very glory of the people of Israel.[3] We must look to futurity for this great accomplishment—for, most obviously, it has not yet been realised. It will be "in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his

[1] Galatians, i, 23.

[2] Matt. v, 14.—See much that is interesting on this whole subject in Bickersteth's 'Restoration of the Jews.'

[3] Luke, ii, 32.

paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This is all yet to come—else how could it be spoken, as an immediate sequence of its fulfilment—that "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."[1]

But, after all, we are but attempting an explanation of the efficient causes in this process—which, though fully and satisfactorily made out, would still leave the final cause of the whole an unresolved mystery. We may be able to follow and understand every step of a mechanism which has been set up for the production of a given result—yet not understand the meaning of the result itself, and still less the reason why such a process should have been instituted, rather than any other, for the purpose of making it good; especially if it be a process which involves in it the perdition, endless and irremediable, of the millions and millions more of many generations. The difficulty is aggravated a thousand-fold, when the Author and Originator of the whole is a Being of infinite power, but a power under the direction of infinite goodness and wisdom—prone as we are to wish, and therefore to imagine, that He may have willed,—and by the energies which belong to Him, have also brought forth an instant creation of perfect light and perfect virtue; and secured it against all the inroads, by which either wickedness or woe could

[1] Isaiah, ii, 2—4; Micah, iv, 2.

have ever entered. This is the mystery of God—not the glorious consummation of a regenerated world, but the deep-laid necessity for the evil which preceded it; and why it had to be reached by so long and dark and laborious a pathway, strewn as it were with the ruins of many successive ages. The origin of evil comes into view while we meditate on these things; and the difficulties of this transcendental question serve still more to beset and baffle our ambitious speculations.

It might be felt by some to alleviate, though most certainly it does not resolve the mystery, if we can state some analogy between the process laid down in this chapter and other parts or passages in the history of the Divine administration. For example, the apostle elsewhere tells us of the law having entered, that the offence might abound.[1] It looks inexplicably hard, that the law, or aught whatever, should have come directly from God for such a purpose—or that sin might be multiplied: But the difficulty seems to be at least mitigated, if not wholly done away, when the apostle further tells us, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"—a grace all the more illustrious, it is certain, from the magnitude and enormity of that guilt over which it triumphed. Nay we are told of another great moral design which was accomplished by sin being thus placed in connection with the law —"that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"[2]—as if the worth and excellence of that which is good, and the exceeding deformity of that which is evil, were, by juxtaposition, brought

[1] Romans, v, 20. [2] Romans, vii, 13.

into more bright and vivid manifestation. And the case before us looks like another specimen of the same thing—characteristic of the Divine administration; and in keeping with, or in the style, of its general policy. He had first illustrated the mercy of the gospel, and all the more palpably, by its taking effect, at least chiefly and primarily, on the Gentiles, wholly given over to idolatry, and disfigured by all the atrocities of human wickedness—rather than on the decent, formal, well-seeming Jews, the professing worshippers of one God; whose vices, of more deep and subtle and spiritual a character, did not glare so on the eye of general observation. But these, in their turn, and after ages of seemingly hopeless alienation, during which they acquit themselves with all the despite and defiance and resolved hardihood of outlaws—on these, obviously reared by Providence for some of its high designs, shall we yet behold the second great illustration of gospel mercy; all the more enhanced, it is certain, by its breaking forth in the train of Jewish perversity and Jewish unbelief, at length giving way, after they had stood their ground and been distinctly persisted in for many generations. This is one undoubted effect of His having concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all (ver. 32). The one, so to speak, is set off by the other—like the effect of light and shade in painting; or when any object in nature is seen all the more strikingly and conspicuously because of the dark ground on which it is projected. In a school of virtue, one chief end is the enforcement of great moral lessons; and this perhaps were best

effected by bringing out in boldest possible relief the evil of sin; and in all their beauty and brightness the characteristics of highest moral perfection, or, which is tantamount to this, the high and holy attributes of Him, in whom all perfection as well as all power have had their everlasting dwelling-place. Now providence is preeminently a school of virtue; and we may therefore expect that history, and in a more especial manner sacred history, where the manifestations of providence are seen in nearest connection with the designs of grace, will abound in such lessons. And accordingly, such is the manifest purpose of many revealed evolutions or passages in the history of the Divine administration —of God's dealings with the world. We have already noticed that a law was brought in, and for the purpose that sin might become (or might appear) exceeding sinful—like a foul blot on a tablet of resplendent purity. And though in a form of a question, yet it is no obscure hint which is conveyed, when Paul asks, Whether it might not be God's will to *show* His wrath, His righteous indignation at moral evil, and to make His power *known*—when He destroys those vessels of wrath which He had before endured with much long-suffering.[1] And in like manner would we infer, that it is to exhibit the Divine character in another of its phases—even the riches of His glory, specified in Ephesians, i, 6, as the glory of His grace—when we read, that, also after much long-suffering it may be, the long-suffering which is termed salvation by the apostle Peter,[2] He heaps His choicest perferments and

[1] Romans, ix, 22. [2] 2 Peter, iii, 15.

blessings on the vessels of mercy, and thus *makes known* the riches of His glory.[1] One main end of the Divine policy in the government and final destiny of men seems to be manifestation—that both heaven and earth might learn thereby the more to hate all evil, to love and admire all worth and goodness and true greatness, whether in themselves or as exemplied by Him in whom all greatness and goodness are personified. In harmony with this view, we read of the Lord Jesus being *revealed* with His mighty angels, on that dread occasion when the glory of His power and sacredness shall be displayed in the destruction of sinners; and the glory of His infinite love for the holy in the triumph and happiness of the saints.[2] And so his disposal of the church does not terminate in, but has an ulterior object to itself—even "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places *might be known*, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." There is evidently here a something pointed at beyond the immediate concern which men have in the Divine procedure—a reference to the distant as well as to the future; and our felt ignorance of this larger and more comprehensive policy should serve to humble and chasten and repress our ambitious speculations. Yet though we see but in glimpses, we cannot fail to discern in Scripture the traces of a constant respect to manifestation as one great drift or design of God's universal government—and that too the manifestation of contrasts, or of things made more striking and conspicuous in themselves, by being presented along

[1] Romans, ix, 23. [2] 2 Thess., i, 7-10.

with their opposites. So essentially and characteristically indeed is holiness a repugnance to moral evil, that some have been satisfied with this as a sufficient explanation for the enigma of its existence—that but for the reality, or at least the conception of evil, there could have been no exhibition of that jealous and invincible recoil from sin, wherewith perfect virtue must ever regard the opposite of itself. For our own parts, we can profess no absolute satisfaction with any of the solutions which have been proposed of these high mysteries. We look upon them all as hypothetical, and yet of use, because fully adequate to the work of silencing, and so placing in abeyance the infidelity alike hypothetical which has been grounded on the questions wherewith they deal. The real and effective evidence for the truth of the Christian revelation is thus left uninjured; and while we gladly accept of these friendly explanations for all that they are worth, we cannot view them to be so complete, as to leave no sense of a difficulty yet unfathomable, and no room for the apostolic reflection—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

But we ought now to enter on a separate treatment of those few verses in the passage which might require any explanation. We must forbear the consideration of such prophetic views as are here suggested, and to which full justice could only be rendered in a distinct work.

Ver. 25. 'In part.' So great a part as to impress a cursory observer with its totality. It was

not just this however—for a certain though very small proportion of the whole nation had been converted. Paul gladly avails himself of this, that he might be enabled to characterise the blindness only as partial; and so be allowed to soften, as his manner is, the representation which he here gives to those Jews whom he is addressing in this epistle of the unbelief of their countrymen.—'Until,' or 'during,' or 'while.' The season of Jewish unbelief will be that of Gentile conversion. We could not from this single verse infer, that, contemporaneous with the restoration of Israel, there was to ensue a remarkable enlargement of general Christianity in the world. This idea, however, might well be suggested by the expression—especially when taken in connection with other parts of the chapter and other prophecies of the Bible. Apart from these, the fulness might be understood to mean, not the great number who were to come in, but the whole number who should be converted, whether that number was great or small. The blindness was to continue while the elect among the Gentiles were gathering,[1] be they few or many; or till all such of them as were ordained to eternal life should believe; or, more generally still, "until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled." This leaves the extent of conversion among the Gentiles undetermined; and also leaves us at liberty to judge, whether, while there is reason to believe that about the time when the Jews are brought in there will be a great enlargement in the general Christianity of the world—whether that enlargement is to precede the Jew-

[1] Mark, xiii, 27.

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ish conversion, or the Jewish conversion is to precede the enlargement. We are inclined to believe that, looking to these two events in the order of cause and effect, they will have a great reciprocal influence on each other—or that there will both be an action and a reaction. If it be a likelihood, on the one hand, that Gentile Christianity, when purified in its quality and made larger in its amount, shall, both by the exhibition of its graces and the efforts of its missionary zeal, tell with great and sensible effect on the obstinacy of Jewish unbelief —the likelihood is not less, that when a movement is once made on the part of these heretofore resolved aliens to the truth as it is in Jesus, it will tend mightily to open the eyes of all nations, so as to impress millions and millions more in favour of that gospel, whose predictions shall then be so illustriously verified; and to which so impressive a testimony will be given, when its most inveterate, and long its most hopeless enemies, shall, after the lapse of many generations, look in mourning and bitterness to Him whom their forefathers had pierced, and, casting away their weapons of rebellion, shall fall down to worship Him.

But our further remarks on particular verses, we must postpone to the next lecture.

LECTURE LXXXVII.

ROMANS xi, 26—36.

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Ver. 26. 'All Israel.' Some would interpret the clause thus—All of Israel who are to be saved. All of them who are ordained to eternal life. There is as much of force in these interpretations as to make it possible, nay we think even likely, that the meaning here of the word all, is not such an absolute and entire totality, as to include each and every one of the nation at the time of their predicted conversion. Yet something more must be conveyed by the term, than that merely all the elect were to be saved—for, whether many or few, this holds true of them in every age. The 'all' must be held to denote so general, as should amount to a national conversion; and as the 'part' in the verse

foreging, signifies some, though so very few as to make an insensible fraction of believers among the Jewish people—so the 'all' of the verse before us, signifies at least so many as should form a great corporate change from Judaism to Christianity, and so as to leave the unbelievers, if any, but an insensible fraction of the whole.

'*Out* of Zion.' The passage referred to is Isa. lix, 20—where the prophet represents the Deliverer as coming to Zion, while the apostle represents Him as coming from Zion. These two inspired men reveal to us a glimpse of one and the same process, though at different but perhaps nearly, if not altogether contiguous parts of it—the one stating a previous ingress of the Saviour to Jerusalem, the other a consequent egress in the prosecution of His great undertaking. The light of prophecy here, as in many other instances, but permits us to contemplate the event as a general reality, without enabling us to enter on very full or explicit details of it. Its still undoubted futurity, however, is manifest from this—its being spoken of in the language of prediction both in the Old Testament and the New; and a prediction which has not had the semblance of a fulfilment since the days of the apostles.

Ver. 27. 'For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.' The conversion intimated here is described in substantially the same terms in Jeremiah, xxxi, 33, 34, and in Hebrews, viii, 8–12; x, 16, 17. It consists of the same steps, and is attended with the same blessed results all the world over; and in every instance, whether of Jew or Gentile, who is turned to Chris-

tianity. The taking away of their sins in this passage seems a blotting out of the guilt incurred by their transgression of God's laws—as equivalent to what in the other passages is said to be a remembrance (in judgment) of their sins and iniquities no more. The turning away of their ungodliness is their sanctification, even as the other was their justification; and is equivalent to what is spoken of elsewhere, as a putting of those laws—from the condemnation of having broken which they were delivered—of putting these laws into their hearts, and writing them in their minds. The covenant with each individual believer is one and the same, in all ages and among all nations.

Ver. 28. 'As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.' Their being enemies for the gospel's sake—points to the subservience of Jewish infidelity, as the instrument of diffusing Christianity through the world. We know that historically the rejection of the gospel by the Jews was followed up by its large and rapid furtherance among the Gentiles; nor can we doubt that this passage in the administration of God's providence had its deep-laid reasons, whether we fully comprehend them or not, in the counsels of the Divine policy.—Again their being beloved for the fathers' sake, points to the regard which God had for Abraham, and to the promise which He made this patriarch, even in the form of a reward for his faithfulness—that He would signalize his posterity, and make them a blessing to the nations of the earth.[1] This is analogous to other instances

[1] Gen. xxii, 16; Leviticus, xxvi, 42; Deuteronomy, iv, 37.

in the procedure of the Almighty's government—as when for the sake of David and other good kings, He continued His favour to Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah.[1]

And yet this final salvatien of the Jews, though thus holding on the worthiness of their fathers, holds also on election, and so on the sovereignty of God. It is as touching the election, that they are beloved for the fathers' sake. To those who have made a profound study of this arduous topic, there will appear no discrepancy between these two things; and indeed their perfect harmony is often as obvious to the wisdom of a plain Christian, as it is to the man of philosophic discrimination. There is no incompatibility whatever between the order of an administration being fixed, and fixed from all eternity, and yet its being a moral administration. Whether a process be absolute and irreversible is one question. What the special terms of that process are, or what the footsteps in it which follow each other, is another. It is the latter question which determines the character of the process; and should the former question be resolved in the affirmative, this, so far from changing or giving uncertainty to the character of the process, just rivets and makes it all the more sure. Give me a process, all the parts and connections of which are bound together by an adamantine necessity; and this hinders not but that in the laws and tendencies and particular sequences of such a process, we may read both its own character and the character of Him who has ordained it—and all the more distinctly and surely, if the process be indeed unalter-

[1] 1 Kings, xi, 13, 36.

able. If in any human government, the deed of virtuous patriotism were generally followed up by the acknowledgment of a public reward — this might serve to characterise it, as being on the whole a virtuous government; and surely it would not dilute, but rather stamp and confirm this character the more, if, instead of being thus followed up *generally*, it were so followed up *always*. In like manner, if, under the divine government, goodness were always followed up in the long run by enjoyment; and righteousness, though even after a series of discouragements in the way of trial, by happiness and honour; and holiness by heaven; and, in a word, the regeneration of every creature into a state of perfect moral excellence, by his secure and immortal well-being—no one could question the title of such a government to the highest moral reverence, and a title all the more firmly established, if these several effects followed in the train of their respective causes with the unexcepted constancy of an order that never changed. We are aware of certain transcendental difficulties, which we forbear to grapple with; but assuredly the task of harmonising the character of an administration as being of perfect moral goodness, with the characteristic of its strict and rigorous and irrevocable necessity, is not one of them—even though a necessity settled and ordained in the counsels of the Almighty from everlasting. And thus particularly might the future and final salvation of the children of Israel be viewed both as the fruit of a primeval decree of election, and as at once the fruit and the reward of the obedience of Abraham. The first does not supersede the second; nay the second is

one of the stepping-stones along which the first is carried, and will at length be made good. Nay it will require another great stepping-stone, ere the decree is consummated—a work of grace in the hearts of Abraham's children; their turning to the Lord, that the veil which now blinds them might be taken away;[1] their deep and mournful penitence, and that worked in them by the Spirit of God;[2] and lastly, their biding not in unbelief, and their ungodliness being turned away.

Ver. 29. 'For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.' That is, repentance on the part of God. What He hath resolved, he shall certainly fulfil. "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" His original purpose, and promise too, respecting the children of Israel, in his own good time, will be accomplished; and the necessary gifts will then be imparted, as well as the necessary calling brought to bear upon them for carrying it into effect. This calling, as being in execution of the decree of election, must, of course, be internal and efficacious—as distinguished from the ordinary and outward calling, such as that wherewith they were plied at the time of the Saviour, and which then proved ineffectual, the things belonging to their peace being hidden from their eyes. At the calling of our text, their eyes shall be opened, and they shall behold Him whom they have pierced, and say Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.[3]

Ver. 30, 31. 'For as ye in times past have not

[1] 2 Cor. iii, 16. [2] Zech. xii, 10, 11. [3] Matt. xxiii, 39.

believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.' It is obvious, as we have already said, that there was a connection, and that too in the way of promotion and subserviency, between the unbelief of the Jews and the Christianity of the Gentiles. This is again affirmed in the verse before us; and a sort of parallelism founded on it, between the respective changes already experienced in part, and to be completed afterwards, on these two great divisions of the human family. What the Gentiles had been in times past when they believed not, the Jews were now. The Gentiles passed out of their former unbelief, and obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews. The Jews will pass out of their present unbelief and obtain mercy, not through the unbelief, but through the mercy bestowed upon the Gentiles. We can see how the grace of God is magnified by a mercy bestowed on men in a previous state of rebellion and apostacy. Its display is all the more illustrious, in that it is shed forth on men in a state of resolute hostility or of deep and settled alienation, rather than on men in a state of expectancy and desirousness of the blessings from heaven which they need; and so it serves to brighten and enhance the character of Him, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor ways as our ways—that His mercy should thus descend on places the darkest and most repulsive, whether on the depravity of the heathen world or on the obstinacy and perverseness of the children of Israel.[1]

[1] Romans, v, 8, 10.

The analogy between the two cases of the Jews and Gentiles, is, that each shall at length have obtained mercy—making transition thereunto from their own previous state of unbelief. The distinction is, that the Gentiles arrived at their blessing through the unbelief of the Jews: The Jews will arrive at theirs through the mercy before shown to the Gentiles. One can perceive how the Jews might have been confirmed in their arrogant, exclusive, and unsocial spirit, had Christianity sprung up amongst them, and taken possession of their nation under the direct and immediate influence of our Saviour's teaching, the Author and Finisher of our faith. It might then have come forth upon the world as Judaism perfected, and in such a way, as, instead of humbling the Jews, might have inflamed still further their extravagant sense of superiority over all the other nations of the earth. But coming as it will through the medium of a previous Gentile Christianity, this strong national partiality, this fond and rooted prejudice of many ages, may at length give way—when, so far humbled as to take from us that true religion in the attitude of recipients, which, otherwise, they might have conferred on us in the attitude of dispensers. It is thus, perhaps, that by a lengthened course of preparation, the training of a spiritual husbandry carried onward through a series of centuries, the world may come to be matured for the establishment within its limits of one great spiritual family—"where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all; and in all."

Ver. 32. There may be reason to believe from other passages and other prophecies in Scripture, that there remains to be yet revealed an infidel antichrist, and so a general falling away from the gospel among the nations of Christendom; but this is not one of these passages. The unbelief in which God hath concluded all, is first the unbelief of the Gentile world before the promulgation of the gospel, out of which they then emerged into Christianity; and second, the present unbelief of the Jews, out of which they also will emerge into Christianity when the time of their restoration comes. It is the present unbelief of the Jews which is spoken of in this verse; but it is the past, and not a future unbelief, of the Gentiles which is there spoken of. It is thus that the apostle adjusts and balances, and if I may so say, equalises the account between the Jews and Gentiles—a main topic with him, from the commencement and throughout the whole of his epistle. He had before spoken of their common vices. He now speaks of their common infidelity—that, after representing both as having fallen into one and the same abyss, he might reconcile both to one and the same method of recovery; and, along with this, establish the great doctrine of justification by faith, as the common and equal footing on which both are taken into acceptance with God. The whole of his argument, whilst intended to harmonise the two parties into one, is fitted also to humble each of them, and especially the Jews. Yet one cannot fail to perceive how studious he is of mitigating to the uttermost the painfulness of his demonstration—that he might

"give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, but please all men in all things, not seeking his own profit but the profit of many, that they may be saved." In the execution of this task, he acquits himself with a tact and a delicacy and an address altogether worthy of the most accomplished courtier—yet only with the skill of this profession, and not with its duplicity; for on the ground of principle, and when aught of truth had to be defended or of error to be rebuked and put down, none more resolute in assertion or more fearless in remonstrance than Paul. This union of an uncompromising firmness with a delicacy the most sensitive, we had almost said the most tremulous, lest unnecessary violence should be done to the feelings of other men—we have always held to be a leading character in the mind and manner of this great apostle.

Ver. 33, 34. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?' It were well to discriminate the precise sentiment of that sublime effusion, wherewith the apostle here concludes and sums up the whole of this contemplation. We should say in the general, that they are the natural rather than any of the moral attributes of the Divinity, which have evoked it. It is not of His mercy that the apostle now makes mention; nor yet of His justice; nor yet of His unswerving truth or fidelity; nor yet of His holiness or dread antipathy to sin. They are His wisdom and know-

ledge, and the depth of the riches of these, which he celebrates in this place; and the unfathomable mystery, both of His counsels and processes; and lastly, the absolute and entire ownership, and therefore disposal or sovereignty which God has of creation—seeing that He is at once the origin and the end of all things. It is true that His judgments, if not His ways, stand related to the principles of His righteous administration—Yet here they are not spoken of as righteous, but simply and generally as inscrutable. The jurisprudence of a lawgiver cannot be appreciated rightly, but by a reference to its moral character—which, indeed, is the most important element of all in the reckoning. But the very thing affirmed here respecting the jurisprudence of Him who is the great Lawgiver of heaven and earth, is, that in our present state at least it is not appreciable by us, that it is beyond our reckoning; and though a time be coming when the mystery of God shall be finished,[1] and we shall be enabled to say, not only "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty," but "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," and "thy judgments are made manifest"—Yet now must we join the apostle in the utterance of our text—'How unsearchable are these judgments, and these ways how past finding out!'

In attending to what that specifically was which called forth this high exclamation from the apostle, we cannot but feel that we are not altogether in a fit state fully to sympathise with him. The events which thus excited him to reflection have been too long familiar to us. And this rejection of the Jews,

[1] Revelation, x, 7.

or admission of the Gentiles, or even reunion of both into one faith and one family—so long as but read of in prophecy, and not yet seen in living fulfilment—these as little move us, as do any of those great historical changes which have long passed over the world, and are now as current as household words in the pages of well known authorship. But we must not estimate from our indifference now, the effect which such a revolution then must have had; and especially in all the force and freshness of its novelty on a Jewish understanding—before the wonder and recency of the great passing changes had subsided; or men, with the education and prejudices of an Israelite, had recovered from the sensation of that violence inflicted on all their previous habitudes of thought and feeling, when God abandoned His ancient people, and made proffer to all men of those blessings and distinctions which till now had been exclusively theirs. And there was something more in it than a reversal to excite surprise. There was an enlargement which must have served mightily to expand the mental perspective, particularly of those Christian Jews, who had just cast off the limitations that so fettered and confined the general understandings of their countrymen. It was a transition from the local to the universal. This enlargement of view from a country to a world in the economy of the Divine word, was fitted to awaken and amplify the mind of its admiring observers—just as a few centuries ago, when in the economy of the Divine workmanship, the mystery of these sensible heavens was laid open, and the human mind made its large and lofty tran-

sition from the view of a world to the view of a universe. Relatively to the state of previous conception at each of these periods, there is a striking similarity between them; and the respective discoveries, the one moral or spiritual the other natural, are fitted to beget a like sense of greatness—whether in the objects contemplated, or in the magnificent designs of Him whose government reaches to all ages and embraces all worlds. It was a mighty stretch at the earlier of these periods, when the view was carried forward from a single nation to the whole human family; and mightier still at the later of them, when carried forward from the earth we live upon to the vast, and for aught we know, the boundless assemblage of those suns and systems which Astronomy hath unfolded. The mind of the apostle seems, in the passage now before us, to have fully shared in the first of these expansions, and even elsewhere to have bordered, nay actually to have entered on the second of them—when on this very theme of a one Christianity for Jews and Gentiles, he tells us of Him from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, and by whom all things were created, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; and then gives us to know, of this evolution in the government and history of the church, that it was meant as an illustration to the whole universe of the manifold wisdom of God.[1]

But these are reflections on the greatness rather than on the incomprehensibility of the King eternal and immortal—on the riches and extent of His

[1] Colossians, i, 16; Ephesians, iii, 10, 15.

creation, rather than on the mysteriousness of His government; and bespeak more the admiration of a magnificence beyond all our previous conceptions, than our wonder in the contemplation of depths and difficulties utterly beyond our present understanding. Now it is not mere expansion in the field of view which calls forth or exhausts the whole sentiment of this passage—as the adoption, for example, of a whole species, instead of but the people of a single nation, into one and the same spiritual family. It is not so much the magnitude of the result, as the rationale of the process, which engages and baffles the mind of the apostle; and which therefore he pronounces to be unsearchable, and past finding out. It is the selection of one household from a world left in darkness and alienation from God—it is the committal to them of the divine oracles, and the preservation amongst their descendants of the true knowledge and worship of the Deity—it is the history of this singular people, through whom was kept up the only remaining intercourse between heaven and earth; and which was finally broken off, after the dealing of many centuries, in the various forms of chastisement at one time and of mercy or endurance at another, till the perversities of stiff-necked and rebellious Israel could be no longer tolerated, and the things of peace and salvation were henceforth hidden from their eyes—it is contemporaneously with the rejection of the Jews, the call of the Gentiles just awoke from the profound lethargy of ages, during which the millions of unvisited and unblest heathenism were suffered to perish in their iniquities—and then, to

close the enumeration, it was the prospect still at the time of Paul, of another dreary nay a double millennium of exile and moral wretchedness for his own outcast countrymen, ere the goodly consummation should arrive, or the latter-day glory was to shine forth on a then happy and regenerated earth —These are the eventful changes in the contemplation of which the mind of our apostle seems to be labouring, as if the footsteps of a series which he felt himself unable to trace, or at least unable to account for. And certainly to us it does look inexplicable, that the same God who could will as we imagine into present effect, an instant and universal blessedness—that He should rather choose to compass the fulfilments of His wisdom and goodness by so lengthened, so laborious a pathway. The difficulty is a thousand-fold aggravated—when we think of the failures, the abortions, the woful and wide-spread degeneracies, lighted up by intevals few and far between of the good or the beautiful in the moral history of the world. We cannot but wonder at such a preparation being right or necessary, ere the secure, the everlasting empire of truth and righteousness shall be ushered in. And yet these are parts of a scheme, and of a scheme in progress, reaching forward to a great and glorious accomplishment, though by initial stages of darkness depravity and disorder, the full meaning or effect of which we cannot comprehend. They are the deep-laid movements of a policy to us inscrutable; and as we have just borrowed an analogy from one of the sciences, we may here avail ourselves of another, and point to the yet hidden enig-

ma of those successive creations which geology has unfolded, and which prove the developments both of animal and spiritual existence to be alike inexplicable. There is the profoundest mystery in both; and whether we try to explore the moral or the physical departments of His administration, it is good to feel the infinity of our distance from Him, whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known.[1] 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?'

Ver. 35, 36. 'Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.' These verses strike at the root of that lofty pretension which it is the great aim of the apostle to overthrow—that of man having any rightful claim upon God, who is at once the origin and the end of all things. To Him we owe not all the objects of enjoyment merely, but all our capacities of enjoyment. This is a theme too big for utterance, and more to be dwelt upon in thought than dilated on in language—the entire subordination of the creature to the Creator, of the thing formed to Him who hath formed it, by whose care it is that we consist or keep together, and whose right hand upholds us continually. It is our part even here, and in the dimness of our present embryo being, to award Him all the glory. This will be the song of our eternity, when we shall see Him as He is, and know even as we are known.

[1] Psalm lxxvii, 19.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

ROMANS, xii, 1, 2.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

VER. 1. 'By the mercies of God'—Those mercies of which he had just spoken as alike applicable both to Jews and Gentiles, whom he now addresses as the subjects of a common discipleship, and under the common title of brethren. The style of his address is eminently fitted to conciliate the men, with whom he had just been holding what at least one class of them might have felt to be a somewhat stern and repulsive argument. As his manner is, he omits no lawful expedient, by which to disarm the repugnance of his pupils to aught which might prove hard or distasteful in the reasonings which he employs; and so he stands before them, not in the attitude of a master to school them into submission, but of a friend and fellow-disciple, to supplicate their gifts and services at the altar of their common Christianity. At this part he makes the transition from doctrine to practice; and on the groundwork of those mercies which he had just demonstrated, tells them what the returns are which are expected at their hands. That gospel mercy which proclaims so full an indemnity for the past, is fla-

grantly misunderstood by those, who conceive of it as holding out a like full exemption from the toils of a future obedience—instead of which there cannot be imagined the more entire renunciation of an old habit and an old will, than what takes place, and takes place invariably, in the economy under which we sit. And there is no dispensation from it. The covenant of works began with service, and ended with reward. The covenant of grace begins with mercy and ends with service; and most certainly a service not short of the former, either in the universality of its range over the whole domain of our moral nature—or at length with every single disciple in the school of Christianity, in the tale and measure of his performances. And can any subordination be more complete than that which is proposed in these verses?—and proposed too on the ground of those mercies, or because of them *(therefore)*, as the rightful and proper return to God for the benefits of this new dispensation. We are called on to present our bodies a 'sacrifice'—not by giving them to be burnt, as were the slain carcases of the Jewish offerings, but to present them 'a living sacrifice;' or, in other words, not by the extinction of our animal life, but by the utter mortification of all that is evil or forbidden in our animal desires, which, if not the death of the body, is at least the death of that which was formerly dear to it even as life itself. The voluntary surrender of that in which the chief enjoyment of life consisted, is a self-denial, or rather a self-infliction, which, if not equivalent, is at least analogous to a literal sacrifice of the person; and is thus denomin-

ated in various parts of Scripture. And certainly it may require a strength of resolution as great as that exhibited in the martyrdoms, whether of principle or of patriotism. And accordingly we read of being "crucified with Christ," of them that are His having "crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," of our being "buried with him in baptism," of our "being made conformable unto his death," of our putting off by a circumcision "the body of the sins of the flesh," of our being "baptized into his death."[1] There is nothing surely in these expressions, to countenance the immoralities or the indolence of antinomianism; and we may well understand how that, to be carried into effect, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.[2] Truly it is not by a slight or easy process, by a listless seeking after life, that we shall make good our entry thereinto, or work out our salvation; but by dint of a hard and laborious striving, so very hard and far above the powers of nature, that it needs the working of that grace which worketh in us mightily.[3]

It is no more a literal sacrifice that we are called to, than Paul's was a literal crucifixion, when he tells us that he was crucified with Christ. Nevertheless he lived. Yet, to signify the actuating power which thus enabled him to stifle and overbear the strongest and most urgent importunities of nature, he further says that it was not he but Christ who lived in him; and, still more to explain the principle or rationale of this great achievement, he lets us know that his life (for the crucifixion he

[1] Gal. ii, 20; v, 24; Col. ii, 11, 12; Phil. iii. 10; Rom. vi, 3.
[2] Matthew, xi, 12. [3] Luke, xiii, 24; Col. i, 29.

underwent did not, as in the case of the Saviour, imply any surrender of this life) that the life which he lived in the flesh was a life of faith on the Son of God—and he adds, "who loved me and gave himself for me." Let us in like manner take the same firm hold on the sure mercies of David—the identical mercies of our text; and on the strength of this confidence, or faith which overcometh the world, we shall accomplish the same victory and make good the same sacrifice which it was the incessant labour of his life to perfect in the sight of God. Let the grace of Christ rule in our hearts, and then sin will no longer have the dominion over us. If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but keep under our bodies and so bring them into subjection, keep them in sanctification and honour, keep them with that holy guardianship which is due to the temples of the Holy Ghost—and finally, to complete the surrender, or merge our will wholly into God's will, we shall not be satisfied with one act of self-denial; but, making it the symbol and earnest of a universal obedience, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God. The supremacy ascribed to Him at the end of the last chapter is universal; and, in keeping with this, the submission laid upon us at the commencement of this chapter is universal also.

And this is a sacrifice which may well be called 'holy'—a term properly expressive of separation. The best and indeed the prescribed way of keeping down the appetencies of the body is to keep at a distance from the objects which excite them. And

thus it should be our prayer and our endeavour to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity; and we are told not to look upon the wine when it is red; and we are bidden to refrain our foot from the path of sinners, and to refrain our tongue from evil and eschew it. The policy of the Christian is first to flee the temptation of alluring objects when he can, and then resist it to the uttermost when he can not. He does the first when he sets no wicked thing before his eyes,[1] or rather avoids it, passes not by it, turns from it, and passes away.[2] He does the second, when in such circumstances as that he cannot withdraw, but may at least withstand—as when he sits to eat with a ruler, and considers diligently what is set before him; and puts a knife to his throat if he be a man given to appetite. The world we live in is a world full of temptation to these distempered, or as the apostle terms them, these vile bodies; and it is only by a strenuous avoidance and a strenuous resistance together, that we can maintain a holy separation from the objects which would otherwise lord it over us, and bring us under the dominion of these evil affections which war against the soul.

'Acceptable unto God.' There is a certain rigid and overstrained orthodoxy, which would banish this term altogether from the doings or the services of men; and has thus, we fear, done a world of mischief to practical religion. It is most true, as they contend, that the perfect obedience of Christ is the only ground of our meritorious acceptance with God—the only consideration on which the rewards of eternity can be challenged or claimed for us as

[1] Psalm ci, 3. [2] Proverbs, iv, 15.

rightfully our due. But this is no reason why acceptance, nay acceptance with God, should be so utterly dissociated as some would have it to be from the obedience of man. On this subject the Bible is far more free and fearless than are many of our sensible theologians. It can tell us to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing; and of the value which He has for our personal virtues, as, for example, a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price; and of the love He bears to the possessor of good moral qualities, and habits, as when it says that God loveth a cheerful giver; and of the chief importance which it assigns to the services of our new obedience, making these the end or terminating object of our Saviour's death, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works; and of the real substantive effect or virtue that there is in an endeavour for adding to our treasures in heaven, or to the rewards and joys of our eternity, as when it bids us be stedfast and immovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain; And, in one word more, of its incessant demand for the right conduct of every disciple, and for the graces and accomplishments of a right character, as shining forth throughout all the gospel, and in each of the epistles. Now we cannot say of all or any part of this, that it is expressly denied by our evangelical Christians. Nay rather, it in words is expressly admitted by them; and it has a place in the formularies of every Protestant

church; and is harmonised by theologians into a consistency with the great doctrine of justification by faith—for they tell us, and tell us truly, that it forms no part of this justification, and that if our services or sacrifices be acceptable at all, they are only acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, in whom alone it is that we can find acceptance either for our persons or services. All this is very distinctly laid down; and yet with many a mind it does not countervail the effect of those denunciations which orthodoxy has launched forth on the presumption and vanity of human works. Such is the evil of fierce controversy, that, after all the attempts to correct or to qualify its previous fulminations on good works, there is still in many an anxious and agitated spirit, a general fear of them. So much has been said respecting the danger which there is of arrogating a merit because of our good works, that we almost feel as if there was a merit in renouncing them—could almost wish them undone, because of the hazard incurred in the doing of them. It is thus, we apprehend, that, as the compound result of all the arguments and asseverations which have been uttered in defence of the true system against the heresies of gainsayers on the subject of our acceptance with God—a freezing interdict has been laid by them on the activities of the Christian life. Surely it is a precious encouragement on the side of gospel obedience that God is highly pleased with it, though He will not admit it as forming our right to the inheritance of heaven—just as the father of a family on earth may be delighted with the services of his children and their

efforts to do his will, though it be not these which constitute their right, their legal, forensic, and challengeable right to a place and a maintenance under the parent's roof. Let us dismiss then the chilling fears of a misplaced and mistaken orthodoxy on this subject; but enter with all alacrity on the path of duty, and in the full sense of a complacent smile from the upper sanctuary to cheer us on. In betaking ourselves to this walk, let us break through the fetters which an artificial theology may have laid upon it; and resolutely, yea hopefully, do the work of obedience, whether we can rightly assign or not the place which it holds in a regular and well-built system of divinity—trusting in the Lord and doing good—giving ourselves up to the practical and prescribed labour of Christianity; and this cheerfully, courageously, and with the comfort of knowing that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.

'Which is your reasonable service.' Perhaps a reasonable, in contradistinction to a ritual service —the one applied to the living sacrifice of our own bodies, the other to the sacrifice of animals under the Jewish law. Not that it is not altogether reasonable to do a given thing, simply because it is the will of God. But there are certain things of which we see the reasonableness, prior to and apart from the voice of any express revelation; and others again in which there would have been no reasonableness, had it not been for the distinct and positive injunction of them by authority of the great Lawgiver. There would have been no reason, for example, in the prescribed form of the

tabernacle, or in the prescribed offerings of the Hebrew ceremonial as laid down by Moses, had it not been for the things showed to him or the things told to him on the mount. There is an analogy between what we now say of the 'reasonable,' and what might be as well said of the 'right.' An observance may be right in itself, or only right and the matter of obligation, because made the subject of a positive or statutory enactment on the part of God. It is truly a most right thing that we should do what He hath commanded, though solely on the ground of the commandment. But the thing thus commanded may, anterior to the commandment, have a primary and inherent rightness of its own. "Children," says the apostle, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"—not right only because God had commanded it, for this might be alleged of every precept which cometh out of His lips; but, separately from this consideration, having a proper and independent rightness of itself. And in like manner, as a service may in its own proper character be right, so may it in its own proper character be reasonable; and this applies pre-eminently to the service of the text—that is, the presentation of our bodies unto God as a living sacrifice. For not only is He Lord of the body, and its rich and bountiful Provider, and the Upholder for every instant of its complex and curious workmanship by the word of his power; and what more reasonable than that the thing which so thoroughly and in all its parts subsists by Him, should in all things be subject to Him?—But let us think of the effect, if, instead of our bodies being made

by us a sacrifice unto God, we should come under the degrading, the brutalising influence of its vile affections, and so become slaves of the body, the wretched bondsmen of one or other or all of its tyrant appetites—when the intervals of a worthless enjoyment should be filled up by the languor, the remorse, the disgust, and self-dissatisfaction, wherewith remaining conscience, so long as it keeps alive, exercises the unhappy victims of sordid indulgence and excess. Or should conscience die, and so the man sink into the animal, let us but think of the moral ruin which ensues, when the master-faculty is put out; and all that is distinctive of a superior or spiritual nature is obliterated; and the hopes of eternity are extinguished, while perhaps the dark imagery of terror, as the only badge and relict of an immortal capacity, might still continue at times to haunt and agonise him; and the Spirit of God takes His final departure from that foul and loathsome tenement, which, under another regimen, might have become a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost; and the abject devotee of those pleasures which he can no longer resist though they now pall upon him, and present him with but the mockery of enjoyment, renounces for ever that service which he would have experienced to be perfect freedom, had he only yielded up his members to be instruments of righteousness—and thus barters irrecoverably away from him the light and the liberty of God's own children. That truly is an unreasonable service, by which Reason is disposted from her supremacy; and all the objects of a rational and immortal creature are given up in exchange for

those short-lived pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.

Ver. 2. 'And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' 'And be not conformed to this world.' The sacrifice of our corporeal affections, involves in it this bidden non-conformity. We should then not fashion ourselves according to our former lusts.[1] The grossness of Paganism made the nonconformity between Christians and those who were without all the more palpable in these days. And accordingly when the disciples of Jesus Christ entered on their new course—resolving no longer to live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; and reckoning that the time past of their lives should suffice them to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when they walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries—then did the unconverted, the world as contradistinguished from the church and lying in wickedness, think it strange of these Christians that they ran not to the same excess of riot with themselves, and so spake evil of them.[2] The distinction may not be so glaring now-a-days, nor force itself so necessarily and irresistibly on the eye of the senses. But the enormities of the heathen world in these days, and of which we read in the descriptions both of the new Testament and of profane authors, were as little scandalous then—as the gaieties and the amuse-

[1] 1 Peter, i, 14. [2] 1 Peter, iv, 2-4.

ments and those various companionships from which all sense of God and all the conversations of godliness are excluded, of the festive and fashionable and general society of our modern world can possibly be now. The distinction is the same, though its insignia be different. There is as wide a difference of spirit still between the children of light and the children of this world, whatever reforms or refinements of manner and external decency the latter may have undergone. The distinction is not the less real, that it is perhaps more latent and lurks now under the subtlety of a disguise which serves more to humanise all, and so seems more to assimilate all. And it requires now as deep and radical and searching an operation to effect the indispensable change, or translate the one character into the other, as it did in those days when the apostle, addressing those of his own disciples, who at one time were fornicators, or idolaters, or adulterers, or effeminate, or abusers of themselves with mankind, or thieves, or covetous, or drunkards, or revilers, or extortioners, said—"And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."[1] This was the process of separation from the world then, and it is the process still—though it be a world now less revolting in its general aspect, and having on it a fairer face of civilisation and social morality. The same mighty agent is needed for the work of regeneration in all ages; and the same total revolution of spirit and character must be

[1] 1 Corinthians, vi, 9-11.

achieved on every son and daughter of Adam, ere they can inherit the kingdom of God.

'But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' This single clause proves the magnitude of the transition. In order to our being not conformed, we must be transformed—and that not by a superficial amendment, but by a renewal, and, more decisive still, a renewal in the very interior of our system—a change not merely on the outward walk, but a change in the central parts of our moral nature, or at the place of command and presiding authority, and where the main spring of every deed and every movement lies. Some would have the body in the first verse, on the principle of the part for the whole, to signify the entire man. But this is unnecessary; and we should beside lose the impressiveness of a distinct reference to each of the two great departments in the human constitution, which we obtain when passing on to the second verse, we find the subjection of the mind provided with an express and authoritative lesson, even as in the first verse is the subjection of the body to the will of God. It is thus that the whole of the living and willing and intelligent mechanism is not only mended, but is virtually though not literally and in substance, made over again. The carnal mind is changed into the spiritual; and we are led to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's.[1]

It is remarkable that this should be the subject of a precept, or that we should be as good as bidden to transform ourselves. It is not more remarkable, however, than that we should be told in

[1] 1 Corinthians, vi, 20.

Ezekiel, to make us a new heart and a new spirit.[1] The solution is found in this—that for every precept, we may be said, under the economy of grace, to have a counterpart promise. And accordingly by the mouth of the same prophet, God, in His own person, sends forth this gracious proclamation —"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes."[2] And what we have to do between this precept on the one hand and this promise on the other, how we must turn ourselves for the purpose of making them good, is distinctly intimated in a following verse of this chapter—"I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."[3] In other words, we have to seek and pray for the offered blessing. It is by 'the mercies of God' that Paul conjures us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. To these mercies we should make our confident appeal; and as these form the subject of his invocation, when he delivers to us the seemingly impracticable charge of renewing ourselves and transforming ourselves, so our faith in these forms our very instrument for the achievement of the task which he puts into our hands.

But this is not all. Even in the high and transcendental matter of our regeneration, we have a something to do as well as to pray for. Indeed the apostle, in the passage now in hand, tells us thus much, when in the preceding verse before he had bidden us be transformed by the renewing of our

[1] Ezek. xviii, 31. [2] Ezek. xxxvi, 26, 27. [3] Ezek. xxxvi, 37.

minds, he tells us how to dispose of our bodies—that is, keep their every appetite under restraint, even though it should be with such a violence to our inclinations as might amount to the feeling of a most painful sacrifice. And so also the prophet Ezekiel in the place already quoted, and before he had bidden his countrymen make them a new heart and a new spirit, lays it in charge upon them to cast away from them all the transgressions whereby they had transgressed.[1] But most significent of all is that saying of Hosea, when he complains of the people, that "they will not frame their doings to turn unto their God."[2] Amid such explicit testimonies as these, the trumpet surely cannot be said to give an uncertain sound. We can neither pray too earnestly, nor work too diligently; and if it be asked, which of these should have the precedency,—better far than any metaphysical adjustment is the sound practical deliverance, that we can neither pray nor work too soon. On the one hand, we should make haste and delay not to keep the commandments.[3] But on the other, the cry of our felt helplessness can never ascend too early. The aspirations of the heart and movements of the hand should begin and keep pace together. Paul's first question at the moment of conversion was, What wilt thou have me to do; and his first recorded exercise is, Behold he prayeth. Let us dismiss, then, the idle question of the antecedency between these two things. Let there be no self-indulgence in praying, for thus should we be antinomians; no self-sufficiency in doing, for thus should we be legalists. It is not by sitting still in the attitude of a mystic and expect-

[1] Ezekiel, xviii, 31. [2] Hosea, v, 4. [3] Psalm cxix, 60.

ant quietism, that we shall carry our salvation. But neither is it by activities, however manifold or boundless, without a constant sense of dependence upon God. From the very outset His helping hand must be sought after. He not only puts His Spirit within us; but He causes us to walk in His statutes.[1]

'That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' The man who lives in and is led by the Spirit of God, will come to know, in the new and heaven-born desires of his own regenerated heart, what the will of God is. That fruit of the Spirit, which is in all righteousness and goodness and truth, must be best known in these its various characteristics and excellencies, by him who is the bearer of it. When God putteth His law into the inward parts of men, and writes it in their hearts—then they need not to be taught of others, saying unto them, Know the Lord, for all who are thus enlightened know Him from the least even to the greatest.[2] They surely know best the laws and lessons of the Holy Ghost, who are the immediate subjects of His teaching; and even they who see their good works recognise in them the lineaments of that divine image in which they are created—and so, on looking to the righteousness and the true holiness of those whose light thus shines before men, discern in these virtues the very will and character of God, and are led thereby to glorify their Father who is in heaven.[3]

[1] Ezekiel, xxxvi, 27. [2] Jeremiah, xxxi, 33, 34.
[3] Ephesians, iv, 24; Matthew, v, 16.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

ROMANS, xii, 3—8.

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

VER. 3. 'For I say, through the grace given unto me.' The particle 'for' establishes a connection between the present and the preceding verse, and which I think might be made out in this way—Paul had just as good as said, that, by being transformed through the renewal of our minds, we should be enabled to prove or discriminate or ascertain what the will of God is. We should be "renewed in knowledge."[1] We should not only be made right in our wills, but right in our understandings also. Indeed the one rightness is a sort of guarantee for the other—He that willeth to do God's will shall know the doctrine of Christ;[2] of Him who pre-eminently and indeed exclusively is the Teacher of the things of God, seeing that no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom

[1] Colos., iii, 10. [2] John, vii, 17.

soever the Son will reveal Him.[1] It is thus that he who wills aright shall be made to know aright, and more especially to know the character and will of God. Now this rectification of the will, and consequently of the understanding, is done by a renewal of the mind, which itself is an operation of divine grace; and so there is a peculiar significancy and connection in Paul telling the Christians of Rome, when proceeding to unfold the will of God for the regulation of their conduct, that what he was going to say was through the grace given unto him. He had just acquitted himself throughout the foregoing chapters of this epistle as a teacher of truth; and he now tells them how he came by his qualifications for discharging the office on which he was about to enter of a teacher of righteousness. He was on the eve of giving forth so many practical lessons—a list of particulars respecting the will of God—which he through grace was enabled as their apostle to reveal; and which they, if indeed his genuine disciples, would also through grace be enabled to recognise, as those very lessons of righteousness which proceeded from God, and had in them the character and seal of the upper sanctuary. Between him and them, there would be the tact and sympathy of a common understanding. They would hear his voice. If gifted with spiritual discernment,[2] their eye would see and acknowledge the rightness of what their teacher set before them.[3] They would not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.[4] In knowledge and in all

[1] Matthew, xi, 27.
[2] 1 John, iv, 1.
[3] Isaiah, xxx, 20.
[4] Ephesians, v, 17.

judgment would they approve[1] the things that are excellent;[2] and so filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,[3] would both teacher and taught give proof to their common discernment of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God,

'To every man that is among you.' He comprehends all in the advice which he offers; but with the special design, we have no doubt, of reading the lesson which they stood most in need of, to those in the church, who, like Diotrephes, loved to have the pre-eminence—whether they were boastful Jews[4] who still retained somewhat of their old leaven, or arrogant Gentiles who boasted against the branches.[5] It was precisely the lesson, which, if it but took them all in, was the most fitted of all others to hush and to harmonise the discordant elements of the society whom he was addressing.

'Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.' This may be regarded either as a general dissuasive against pride, and we shall not go astray though in part we so understand it; or, it may be viewed as having a special reference to the temper and conduct of the various ecclesiastical functionaries—each signalised by his own distinct gift, and holding his own distinct office in the church. The following context clearly proves that this latter object too was in the mind of the apostle, which in no way precludes our looking to it in the former light also as a morality

[1] Δοκιμαζειν.—The same is the original word for "prove" in Romans, xii, 2. [2] Phil. i, 10.
[3] Col. i, 9. [4] Romans, ii, 17, 23. [5] Romans, xi, 18.

of universal application. We cannot but think, however, that, in the direction here given, the case of the church's office-bearers, if not chiefly, was at least fully in his eye. He wanted them in particular not to think highly of themselves, lest they should aspire to such offices as they were not fit for. What he desired was, that each should be satisfied with his own special gift and his own calling—just as he received it from that Spirit who divideth to every man severally as He will.[1] He would have each to keep by the part assigned to him, without taking upon him, and still less without despising or undervaluing the part which belonged to another. The next clause presents a consideration eminently applicable to this understanding of the matter.—'According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.' The very consideration that it is God who determines for every man his place, should not only make the man satisfied to keep within it; but, if a place of honour, it should lead him to bear meekly and modestly the distinction thus conferred upon him by a higher hand. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" And then it is but given in measure—as if in contradistinction to Him who was the great Pattern of humility, and to whom it was given without measure. The expression—every man's *measure* of faith—implies that the faith of each was limited; which it might be, either in degree, as the general faith which makes one a Christian is stronger or weaker with different individuals; or in kind, as some special faith, the exercise of which was followed up by a forth putting of

[1] 1 Corinthians, xii, 11.

some one or other of the special gifts or endowments of that period. Thus there was the faith of miracles, which enabled one man to work them;[1] and a faith having respect to a different object, which empowered another to prophesy, or a third to speak tongues, or a fourth to interpret them, or a fifth who was qualified by his peculiar faith for his peculiar office which might have been the discernment of spirits, or some one or other of those numerous diversities which in that age of preternatural manifestations made part of the full complement of a Christian church. Each man had his own sort of faith, and, appropriate thereto, his own sort of function. "Believest thou that I, the Lord of these various administrations, am able to do for you *this*?[2]—And according to these their several faiths, was it severally done unto them. It might well have humbled them to consider, that, not only were the gifts of one and all received by them, but the preceding and preparatory faiths proper to each gift were respectively dealt out to them. God dealt out to every man his measure of faith; or, understanding it in its more special and restricted sense, God gave to each of these privileged men that particular faith which led or opened the way to him for his particular acquirement. And the very same consideration ought powerfully to tell in the humbling of all spiritual pride—for it holds true of the general faith, the faith by which we are saved, that, not only is the salvation a gift (by grace are ye saved); but the very faith is not of ourselves, it being the gift of God.[3] And indeed in the exercise of faith, from the very nature of it,

[1] Luke, xvii, 6. [2] Matt. ix, 28, 29. [3] Eph. ii, 8.

all is fitted not to exalt but to humble—for the greater our faith, the greater is our self-renunciation; and the more singly, as well as more strongly, do we draw and depend on One who is higher than ourselves. It is thus that the loftiest in faith is necessarily the lowliest in self-distrust or self-abasement. It is altogether an act of self-emptying, the very opposite of arrogance or self-elation; and is clearly so viewed by the apostle, when he checks the boastful disposition of his converts, by the consideration that thou standest by faith, and therefore be not high-minded, but fear.[1]

Ver. 4, 5. 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' Now follows the context which determines the more special of the two meanings assigned to the preceding verse—as bearing, though not an exclusive, at least a very distinct reference to the office-bearers of a church—namely, that each keep within his own particular sphere; and no one thrust himself into the duties, or usurp the office of another. As in other Scriptures,[2] he here avails himself of the human body as a figure, by the various members of which he would illustrate the mutual helpfulness of the church's several functionaries to each other, as well as the indispensableness of each to the well-being and perfection of the whole—they being one body in Christ the Head, and in virtue of their common relation to this one body, being every one members one of another. The same is expressed otherwise in 1 Cor. xii, 27; and signifies the mu-

[1] Rom. xi, 20. [2] 1 Cor. xii, 12; Ephes. iv, 15; v, 30.

tual subserviency and use of the parts to each other, as well as their harmonious adjustment into one system. And upon this analogy does he ground his lesson of the confusion and disorder that would ensue, did each encroach on the proper business of the other—as if the foot were to attempt the work of the hand, or any one member were to undertake the functions of any of the rest. And his two-fold direction is, that each should abide by his own duties, while he maintains the utmost deference for the place and performance of the others—being at once helpful to all and doing honour to all. It is thus that they would best demonstrate their being in Christ—and that not by an ostensible or merely economical, but by a vital and personal and real union. We can never overrate the vast importance for Christianity of such a unity as this among a church's members and church's office-bearers. This is powerfully manifested in our Saviour's prayer[1]—that all His disciples might be one, even "as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" It is further worthy of observation, that to save the heats and the heart-burnings incidental to the complex and economical structure of a Christian society, the description of its mechanism is similarly followed up by the apostle in his Epistles to the Corinthians and the Romans—there by a glorious persuasive to charity, and here by a series of verses, which together make up the brightest tablet of the social moralities ever presented to the world. In his representation too of the same

[1] John, xvii, 21.

thing to the Ephesians, it is the grand lesson of love which forms the main end and burden of his argument.

But before proceeding to the enforcement of this lesson, either in its general form, or in its various applications, as set forth in the last half of the chapter on hand—let us first follow the apostle in his enumeration of the diverse acts or offices, which in his days appertained to a Christian church, and must of course have been of beneficial operation in subserving the designs of this great moral institute. But before entering on the exposition of the verses where these are specified, we would remark on the great number of distinct services which were laid each on a distinct set of office-bearers in apostolic times, coupled with this maxim of Church government which seems generally to have obtained at that period—even that each distinct functionary should keep by his own distinct functions, as if these were enough for all his energies. This subdivision of employment, and that too in the proper work of a Christian church, was greatly proceeded on, and that too in the best and most prosperous and most efficient period of its history, when it had just come fresh from heaven upon the world, and drew direct, or at first hand, from the fountains of inspiration. But the principle which was so much respected then, we grieve to say it, is signally traversed in the present day. One might well have imagined, that in that season of extraordinary and preternatural endowments, the Spirit of God could have overborne the varieties of nature; and, without respect to the separate talents and dispositions

of each mental constitution, could have fitted one man for the discharge of many offices. But this is not His method; and, instead of overbearing, He imitates the variety of nature—dividing to every man severally as He will: And so we behold in the spectacle of a primitive church, the economy of a complex and variegated service made up of many offices—not accumulated on one man, but parted with a right and proper adaptation among many office-bearers, where each laboured in the task he was fitted for, and meddled not with the employments or the services of other men. Surely now, and in this far less gifted age, it is all the more necessary to consult the special ability of each for the special work in which, whether by nature or grace, he is most qualified to excel. We should suit the objective to the subjective—a great lesson, and as well in the business of the church as in the business of general society. In this matter a wise Christian policy, or sound policy of the church, is at one with the policy of the world. We should, as much as possible, humour, even as the Spirit Himself does, the constitutional varieties of taste and talent among men—a maxim this, which has been signally traversed in our present day—when ministers are made men of all works; and each, more especially if he have earned an eminence for something, has many things laid upon him; and so is drawn away from his own favourite, which, generally speaking, if permitted to keep by it without molestation, would to him be the far most productive walk of Christian usefulness. What makes it all the more ruinous is, that rarely indeed is one

man eminent in more than one thing; and the sure way therefore of degrading him from eminence to mediocrity, is to bustle and belabour him with more than one thing. In the time of the apostles, the work of the Christian ministry was broken down into manifold departments; and we then beheld the goodly spectacle of a well-going church, having its business conducted and carried forward by means of a well-stocked agency. The tendency now is in an opposite direction—to abridge and economise, and thus mutilate and impair to the uttermost the original machinery of a Christian church. And so not only have many of its primitive offices been lost sight of and fallen into desuetude; but the few remaining office-holders, on whom the whole burden is devolved, instead of operating each with intense efficiency and power of observation on his own separate employment, is forced to generalise and do all slightly, or to neglect and leave much undone. And no wonder, therefore, at the complaints of our having lighted on a day of small things, and among the pigmies of a slender and superficial generation.

Ver. 6–8. 'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' Whether ours be the gifts of Providence, or of what is properly termed grace—that is, whether they have

been conferred on us by nature, or more specially through the channel of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the very same lesson is applicable to both. It is alike our duty to consecrate them to the service of God and the good of mankind. They alike proceed from Him—for what hast thou, O man, that thou didst not receive? And far better, both in the church and in society, that each should be provided with his own sphere of labour; and that it should be the kind of labour for which, by his specific endowments, be they of genius or habit or grace, he is best adapted. But let us look to the matter ecclesiastically, and with a strict reference to the promotion of Christianity in our respective neighbourhoods; and we shall come nearer to the main object of the apostle, who recognises the difference between the gifts of one man and another, as due to the grace that was respectively given to each of them. This does not necessarily limit our view to the varieties of official service—though these be included in it, and indeed form the cases of chief consideration. Still the lesson of these verses is a lesson for the members of a church as well as office-bearers—it being alike the duty of all to lay themselves out for the cause of religion, and that according either to the opportunities which are without, or to the talents and capacities which they feel to be within them. But let us attend to what these services particularly are, as specified and enumerated in the verses before us.

'Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.' In the following induction of the gifts 'differing according to the grace' given,

we may remark, that there are none of those extraordinary powers which the apostle specifies in the wider enumeration of his Epistle to the Corinthians, where he tells of the "diversities of gifts" which are by the same Spirit.[1] There is not one of the functions spoken of here, which might not to a certain extent be discharged by Christians in an individual or private, as well as in an official capacity. So that while we have no doubt the apostle had chiefly in his eye the officials of the congregation, the lessons which he gives are of catholic application, and might be appropriated by all. To prophesy was without question the professional employment of a distinct class of office-bearers in those days—"And he gave some, prophets."[2] It is well known, however, that prophesying in Scripture is not restricted to the foretelling of what is future. In this passage there is no cognisance taken of any miraculous office. The prophesying here spoken of is tantamount to ordinary preaching. In the Scriptural sense of the term, any man of God is a prophet, whether he be endued with the preternatural knowledge of coming events or not—simply if he be an instructor in the things of God; and that whether the instruction in which he deals be instruction in doctrine or instruction in righteousness, or is comprehensive of both. Here we think it used in its generic sense; and that these its two species are particularised afterwards under the heads of teaching and exhortation. And these prophets are called on to exercise their vocation according to the proportion of faith. We cannot

[1] 1 Corinthians, xii, 4. [2] Ephesians, iv, 11.

think that by this is meant what theologians term the analogy of faith. This clause we hold to be of the same force and import with the final clause of the third verse—'according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith'—that measure, in fact, which regulates both the kind of gift and the degree of its exercise. The same qualifications then may be applied, not to the office of prophecy alone, but to each of the offices that are mentioned afterwards. And if instead of offices we regard them as duties, certain it is, as we said before, that they are competent to the members of a church as well as to its office-bearers. That private Christian acts as a prophet in whom the word of Christ dwells richly in all wisdom [1]—when out of the abundance of a heart thus charged, his mouth speaketh.[2] He believes, therefore he speaks;[3] or, agreeably to the expression before us, his utterance is in proportion to his faith. It is not for clergy alone surely to monopolise this branch of Christian usefulness—a usefulness not confined to the pulpit, but which might spread and be multiplied amongst the social parties of every neighbourhood, when they that fear the Lord speak often one to another.[4] It is not for ministers alone, but the duty of every man so to season his speech, as that it should be alway with grace.[5] It is surely not to ministers alone that the apostle says—"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."[6] As little then does that which immediately follows apply exclusively to

[1] Col. iii, 16. [2] Matt. xii, 34. [3] Psalm cxvi, 10.
[4] Mal. iii, 16. [5] Col. iv, 6. [6] Ephes. iv, 29.

ministers, but is intended for all—Let what proceedeth out of your mouth be good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

'Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering.' 'Ministry'[1] we hold also to be a generic term, like prophecy in the verse which goes before; and comprehensive of the two things which come afterwards under the heads of giving and showing mercy. The great lesson, however, Let each mind his own business, is still kept up and carried out to all the departments of official, and, in all the instances we might add, of general service. The lesson primarily and specially directed to church officers is applicable to every man. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."[2] Looking again ecclesiastically and not generally to the matter, the ministry in this verse may be distinguished from prophecy in the one before—as that which properly appertaineth to "the outward business of the house of God."[3]

'Or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.' The apostle now returns on the prophetical office, and specifies two distinct branches of it. The faculties of teaching and exhorting may be combined in the same individual; and indeed in these days, they are best laid upon one person, the ordinary minister of a congregation. Yet the two faculties are so far separate, as in other times to have given rise to separate functions; and accordingly, in the machinery of more churches than one, have we read both of the

[1] Διακονια. [2] 1 Peter, iv, 10. [3] Nehemiah, xi, 16.

doctor and the pastor as distinct office-bearers. The one expounds truth. The other applies it, and presses it home on the case and conscience of every individual. The didactic and the hortatory are two distinct things, and imply distinct powers —insomuch, that, on the one hand, a luminous, logical, and masterly didactic, may be a feeble and unimpressive hortatory preacher; and, on the other, the most effective of our hortatory men, may, when they attempt the didactic, prove very obscure and infelicitous expounders of the truth. Both are best; and we should conform more to the way of that Spirit who divideth His gifts severally as He will, did we multiply and divide our offices so as to meet this variety. It were more consonant both to philosophy and Scripture, did we proceed more on the subdivision of employment in things ecclesiastical.

'He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.' If the duty here specified be regarded as a function in the hand of a functionary, it is that of a deacon or distributor of the church's alms. The word in the original for simplicity has been variously interpreted, and made to stand for a great many different virtues. Its proper signification is singleness; and wherever its place or connection determines its meaning to some one of these virtues, it will mean that virtue in a state of purity; and as free from the alloy of any corruption, or the influence of any principle adverse to or different from itself. Thus in 2 Cor. viii, 2, there can be no doubt of its meaning a strong and single-hearted liberality; in 2 Cor. i, 12, a single-hearted conscientiousness—and that

too in the midst of distracting forces; in Eph. vi, 5, a simple devotedness to the will of Christ; the same in Col. iii, 22; 2 Cor. xi, 3, an entire and undivided credence in the doctrine of Christ; and in the passage before us, a singleness of aim on the part of our deacon to do aright the duty of his calling—a oneness of purpose to fulfil the end of his appointment, which was not the satisfaction of the poor for the sake of his own popularity, but so to deal with them in the office of a distributor, as might best subserve the good of the poor, or be most conducive to their real and substantial well-being. Such simplicity as this might lead him to a large distribution of money or not, according to circumstances. Its aim is not the greatest possible amount of liberality, but the greatest possible benefit of those who are the objects of its care. That Christians in general have a part in this rule is quite obvious. They are called to be willing to distribute, and ready to communicate, and to consider the poor, and to open the bowels of their compassion towards them. What the office-bearers are required to do for the paupers of the church, all are required to do as they have the opportunity and the call for the poor of society at large.

'He that ruleth, with diligence.' There seems to be interposed here a function not exclusively confined to the business either of prophecy or deaconship, but which may extend to all other ecclesiastical business, and has been specially applied to the discipline of the church. It is true that of the ruling elders some there were who laboured in word and doctrine; but in modern practice they who

owned this title have had chiefly to do with matters of discipline. And were but the territory of a parish, with its population, rightly parcelled out amongst them—did they but take cognisance of the moral and religious habits of their respective families—would they but prosecute their weekly or periodic rounds of visitation, and do their uttermost in stimulating the education and the economy and the temperance and the church-going and the family worship of all the households within their charge—In this high work of philanthropy, there is ample scope for as much diligence as they can afford to expend upon it: But along with this, by the Divine blessing on their labours, the amplest encouragement, in that most delightful of all employments, the prosperous management of human nature—to be followed up in God's good time by that most delightful of all rewards, the elevated morals and piety of those neighbourhoods over which they expatiate. Here too, it is evident, that the Christian usefulness which might be achieved by the elder of a church, lies within the reach of all in a greater or less degree; and that it is the duty of all, thus to lay themselves out for the furtherance of religion in the world.

'He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' There was an official channel provided for this species or modification of benevolence too in the ancient Christian churches. It formed a distinct office from that of deacon or almoner, whose business it was to act as a dispenser among the poor of the charities of the faithful. Besides these, there were those whose part it was to officiate among the

distrest from other causes than that of mere poverty, as the afflicted in any other way, and especially the diseased. They were distinct too from those "elders of the church," of whom we read in James, and who were sent for by the sick to pray over them, or in the discharge of a spiritual duty. The visitors of whom we now treat had the charge rather of a temporal ministration—attending the sick at their own houses, to whom they gave the comfort of their presence, and the help of their personal services. For the better execution of this trust, there was appointed an order of deaconesses, who officiated then very much as do the sisters of charity in later times. It was quite an appropriate lesson for them that what they did they should do 'with cheerfulness'—or with perfect good will and a congenial liking for the task, that, from their very smiles and looks of kindness, the objects of their care might derive a happiness in sympathy with their own. This too is obviously a lesson for all; and is as applicable on the walk of general philanthropy as within the economy of a church. Whoever has leisure for such services of humanity, would do well to study this advice of the apostle—though primarily designed by him for the office-bearers of an ecclesiastical community. The goodly equipment of offices in the ancient church for all sorts and varieties of well-doing, carries with it a severe reproach on the meagre, stinted, and parsimonious apparatus of modern times.

LECTURE XC.

ROMANS, xii, 9—13, 15, 16.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.....Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

Though the apostle may be regarded in the few last verses as addressing himself in a more especial manner to the few office-holders of a select society —yet certain it is, that the instructions which he gives them are based on the soundest principles of a general ethics, that had a permanent and universal application; and wherewith he now breaks forth on a field as general, as are the principles themselves which he had just been urging and enforcing on the occupiers of a narrower sphere. No one can question that in what follows, they are not rules limited to but a few cases or situations, but the wide and catholic moralities of the species in which he deals, of the same extent and compass with humanity itself, or in every way as general as Christianity herself is general. We may therefore omit henceforth the consideration of the church's

office-bearers, and feel that they are now those duties of unexcepted obligation which men owe to their God and to each other wherewith from this time we have properly to do.

Ver. 9. 'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.' 'Let love be without dissimulation.' Or, as we have it in other scriptures—let ours be "love unfeigned."[1] The spirit of this direction is the same with that which the apostle, a few verses before, had laid upon the deacons—[2] Let him who giveth do it with simplicity." There is the frequent semblance both of faith and love without the reality of either; and so he speaks too of unfeigned faith.[3] He elsewhere speaks of the sincerity of our love.[3] The charge here given is tantamount to that of the apostle John—"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."[4]

'Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.' I think with Calvin, that it is not moral good in the general, or moral evil in the general, which is here intended; but that good which springs immediately from love to one's neighbour, and that evil which springs as immediately from the opposite affections of hatred, malice, or revenge. It is the same good and evil as that spoken of in the last verse of this chapter—where the apostle tells his disciples to overcome evil with good—that is, to meet the persecution and the injustice of enemies, not with the maledictions of anger or returns of vengeance, but with blessing and kindness and peace. The good which he bids them cleave to in

[1] 2 Cor. vi, 6; 1 Pet. i, 22.
[2] 2 Corinthians, viii, 8.
[3] 1 Tim. i, 5; 2 Tim. i, 5.
[4] 1 John, iii, 18.

the one verse, is that which he also tells them not to quit their hold of in another, but to keep by and wield as the instrument of a great moral victory. And the evil which in the first of these two places he bids them abhor having any part or performance in themselves, is the very evil which he tells them not to retaliate, should it ever be inflicted on them by others.

Ver. 10. 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.' The words in the original convey more strongly and specifically the affection of our text, than has been adequately rendered in our translation. The being kindly affectioned is expressed by a term which means the love of kindred, or by some called instinctive; and which at all events is far more intense than the general good liking that obtains without the pale of relationship between man and man in society. It is an affection distinct from, and in general greatly more tenacious and tender, than that of ordinary friendship. And, to stamp upon it a still greater peculiarity and force, it is added that Christians should be kindly affectioned one to another with *brotherly love*—an affection, the distinctness of which from that of charity, is clearly brought out in the enumeration of virtues or graces made by the apostle Peter.[1] And to brotherly kindness add charity—the same with brotherly love in the original; and as distinct from general love or charity in the moral, as the magnetic attraction is from the general attraction of gravity in the material world. This more special affinity which binds together the members of the

[1] 2 Peter, i, 7.

same family; and even of wider communities, as when it establishes a sort of felt brotherhood, an *esprit de corps*, between citizens of the same town, or inhabitants of the same country, or members of the same profession, and so originates the several ties of consanguinity or neighbourhood or patriotism—is nowhere exemplified in greater force than among the disciples of a common Christianity, if theirs be indeed the genuine faith of the gospel. It is in fact one of the tests or badges of a real discipleship. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."[1] It gives rise to that more special benevolence which we owe to the "household of faith,"[2] as distinguished from the common beneficence which we owe "unto all men"—and which stood so visibly forth in the first ages among the fellow-worshippers of Jesus, as to have made it common with observers to say—Behold how these Christians love each other.

'In honour preferring one another'—each leading the way in acts of respect and courtesy—the contest being which shall render the other the greatest deference and honour. "Let each esteem other better than themselves."[3] This would remove one of the greatest obstacles in the way of mutual affection—the great lesson of our passage, as it is the great lesson of the evangelic morality throughout the New Testament. Self-preference and jealousy of each other's reputation, have in all ages of the Christian church been the greatest provocatives to that envying and strife which are oppos-

[1] 1 John, iii, 14. [2] Gal. vi, 10. [3] Philip. ii, 3.

ed to the meekness of the wisdom that is from above. Hence in a very great degree the unseemly contentions of ecclesiastical men, which have ever proved the worst hindrances to the adoptions of measures for the good of Christianity. This love of power and of pre-eminence has in all ages been adverse to the objects of a sound and disinterested ecclesiastical patriotism. It might be traced even to apostolical times. Paul seems to have been sensible of its presence among the chief men of the council at Jerusalem, and to have felt the necessity of protecting himself against it. And so before he would submit his question to a public assembly, he took care by a round of previous attentions to propitiate those of them who were of reputation, by communicating with them privately, lest by any means he should run or had run in vain. He with a most justifiable wisdom went first to those "who seemed to be somewhat"—it might have been perhaps for the purpose of obtaining counsel and information; but the further purpose seems to be insinuated of gaining them over by the homage beforehand of his recognition and respect. And even should we discern in this policy of our great apostle, the offering of a little incense to the personal vanity of those on whom he waited—we see nothing in this but the marvellous identity of human nature at all times and in all places of the world; or that the leaders and men of consequence then should be of the same affections with the men of consequence now —the ecclesiastical somewhats of the present day.[1]

Ver. 11. 'Not slothful in business; fervent in

[1] Galatians, ii, 6.

spirit; serving the Lord.' The word here translated 'business,' is the same with that which in the 8th verse is translated "diligence." Its proper and primitive signification is 'speed,' and hence the affection which prompts to speed—or earnestness, intenseness, the desirousness of a heart set on some particular object, and therefore setting one busily to work for its accomplishment; and thus the fervency of spirit in the next clause may be looked to as the animating principle of that diligence in business which is here inculcated—even as in the case of Apollos,[1] who, "being fervent in the Spirit," did in consequence speak and teach diligently the things of the Lord." But whether we retain the word business, or render it into any other of the relative terms, there is no mistaking the sense of this first clause, which is not to be slothful but diligent; and that whatever the business may be, if an expedient and a lawful one. The question whether it be a sacred or secular employment which is here referred to, will not embarrass him whose honest aim it is to leaven with the spirit of the gospel every hour of his life, and every work which he puts his hand to. The man who studies to observe "all things whatsoever" Christ hath commanded him,[2] will still feel himself religiously employed when following the precept,—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."[3] He will see no difficulty in making the advice here given to be of universal application, who aspires to a conformity with the sayings—"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"

[1] Acts, xviii, 25. [2] Matt. xxviii, 20. [3] Eccl. ix, 10.

—"Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Neither in the absence of any express utterance from Scripture itself, will he be careful to determine, whether it be the Spirit of God or the spirit of man that is spoken of in the next clause—if sufficiently indoctrinated by Scripture at large in the truth, that all right fervency in the spirit of man is from the Spirit of God alone—is the product of fire from the sanctuary, and not of his own kindling.[1] It is thus that in practical Christianity there is a conjunction of prayer with performance; and the disciple striveth mightily according to the grace that worketh in him mightily.

'Serving the Lord.' There is a different reading adopted now by the most learned of our Biblists; and that because of the number and authority of those manuscripts which present the Greek word for "time." We should then understand the direction to be—'Do diligently each work in its own season'—or, "Let each hour be busily filled up with its own proper employment.' We should have given our assent to this emendation, but for the word 'serve,' which in the Greek implies subjection, and in the most entire and submissive form; and in which sense it stands in far more suitable relation to a living superior, and most of all to Him who liveth and is Supreme. It were apposite enough to speak of suiting the time, but not of submitting to the time—whereas nothing can be more appropriate than that in all things we should submit ourselves unto the Lord.

Ver. 12. 'Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribula-

[1] Isaiah, i, 11.

tion; continuing instant in prayer.' There are some commentators who endeavour to run a thread of continuity throughout the various precepts of this chapter; and so to force a dependence of one upon another contiguous to it, as would perhaps somewhat pervert the obvious meaning of certain of these rules. Instead of supposing that each rule suggested its fellow, and that they all follow each other, like the terms of a series on the principle of the association of ideas—it seems to us the better theory, that they are also in part suggested to the mind of the apostle by his direct view of the exigencies of that society which he was addressing; and that therefore we behold in these precepts as much and as little of the miscellaneous, as there was of the miscellaneous at the time in the chief temptations and circumstances of the Romish Christians. Now in the first instance, they were exposed to jealousies and contentions from within, to meet which we have one class of charges—mutual respect, and mutual cordiality; and more especially the duties of office-bearers, whose part it was to refrain from all lordly contempt or usurpation of the work of other functionaries, and each to keep rightly and assiduously at the appropriate business of his own calling. And then in the second instance, they were exposed to persecution from without; and hence another and a distinct set of charges—hope, and patience, and prayer, and sympathy for the afflicted among their brethren, and succour to those of them who were spoiled of their goods; and, most of all, meekness and forbearance and unquelled charity under all the provocation and injustice that were heaped upon them.

'Rejoicing in hope'—and that even in the midst of tribulations.[1] This must have been the hope of glory in another life—the only hope which could rejoice the hearts of those, of whom Paul says, that if in this life only they had hope, they were of all men the most miserable.[2] Theirs was a hope which reached beyond the grave—the hope of those who walked by faith and not by sight, or who looked beyond the things which are seen and temporal to those which are unseen and eternal. It was this which made all their afflictions light unto them—the contemplation of that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, which was to follow their present trials, and for the full enjoyment of which these trials were fitted to prepare them.[3]

'Patient in tribulation.' The very same hope which ministers joy in the bright prospects of the future, ministers patience under the sufferings of the present. Even Jesus Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross."[4]

'Continuing instant in prayer.' For though hope will elevate and sustain in the midst of adversities; yet the hope of unseen realities on the other side of death requires to be itself sustained by a power that is above nature—else nature gives way. We are made to "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."[5] It is thus that the faith and fortitude of the Christian are alimented by constant supplies of light and grace from above, and which supplies are kept up by instant prayer. For this purpose we must pray and watch for the

1 Rom. v 2, 3; James, i, 2. 2 1 Cor. xv, 19.
3 2 Cor. iv, 18; v, 7. 4 Heb. xii, 2. 5 Rom. xv, 13.

Spirit with all perseverance.[1] Prayer is not confined to the occasions of its set and formal utterance. It might alternate in brief and frequent aspirations with the familiar business of life. Nay it may exist as a prayerful disposition in the heart, or in the form of a perennial tendency upward and heavenward; and he who owns such a disposition, whether he have the power and opportunity of sending forth articulate supplications or not, may be said to pray without ceasing.

Ver. 13. 'Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.' The view of the church at Rome as a suffering and persecuted church might well have suggested these rules also—not but that they are of permanent and universal obligation, but that there was a more pressing and peculiar call for them in these days of violence—when the very profession of Christianity exposed them who held it to the loss of their substance, or to be dismissed from the service of their employers. And the word is expressive of something more than a simple giving. It means to give with a fellow-feeling, and as if the case of the sufferer was one's own. It is our duty to give unto all, if it be for their good, as we have opportunity. But here the apostle speaks of giving for the necessities of the saints—of giving therefore with that special sympathy which he enjoins in another form, when he bids his disciples rejoice with them who rejoice, and weep with them who weep. The common danger of these times disposed men all the more readily so to give, as if they had all things common.

'Given to hospitality.' And this too is far from

[1] Ephesians, vi, 18.

being a local or merely occasional virtue—though doubtless there was a more urgent occasion for its exercise in these days. The proper sense of hospitality is kindness to strangers, or to those who were at a distance from their own home—a wholly different thing from the conviviality which opens one's house to festive parties made up of acquaintances from the immediate neighbourhood. This was the common lot of Christians in those days—often scattered abroad by persecution,[1] and dependent both for food and shelter on the compassion of their brethren in the faith. Let it not be imagined however, that this is a duty confined to any one period, or called forth by the extraordinary circumstances of the church during the first ages—a common expedient this for diluting the peculiar morality of the gospel, or blunting the force and application of its most authoritative precepts. There is here an obligation laid on Christians of all times as indelible as the record which contains it—distinct, however, from that expenditure on the enjoyments of the social board, which now forms almost all that is known under the name of hospitable—as distinct as the feasts enjoined by our Saviour to the poor and the helpless are from the merry companionships, that alternate or pass in rounds from house to house among the children of fashion and luxury. Not that we would utterly proscribe these reciprocal convivialities of the middle or higher classes—burdensome though they often are, and wearisome to an extreme from the entire destitution, whether of the intellectual or the spiritual, in the conversation of our every-day parties. Our religionists might

[1] Acts, viii, 1, 4; xi, 19; James, i, 1.

in a great degree be protected from this latter annoyance, were they but consistent with themselves; and did they aim at an entire, instead of a partial Christianity. Had they more of openness and intrepidity in their talk—when they sit at the same table, did they meet together on the footing of a society of immortals—would they speak of the country whither they were going, and of the character which prepared for it—A goodly number even of their present society might be amalgamated into a conformity with their own spirit, while the rest might be scared away from those resorts, in the atmosphere of which they could not breathe with congeniality or comfort. There would thus be brought about a thing mainly wanted in our day—a broader line of demarcation between the church and the world. It might seem a paradox, but is not the less true, that it is easier to be an altogether than an almost Christian.

Ver. 15, 16. 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.' Passing over at present a verse which regards the deportment of the persecuted Christians to their enemies, we, in the next two verses, still find the apostle occupied with the matters of that internal morality which should subsist among themselves, or with the directory of their conduct to each other.

'Rejoice with them that do rejoice.' He, a few verses before, had bidden them rejoice in hope; and certainly it is well that Christians, for their

mutual encouragement, and to uphold the stedfastness of their faith, should speak often together of that heaven which is the home of their common expectations. But beside this, the sympathy of congratulation seems to be recommended in this clause, even as the sympathy of pity forms the subject of the next. A sincere happiness in the happiness of others, argues not merely the strength of our affections, but our freedom from envy towards them.

'And weep with them that weep.' There is a charm in the fellow-feeling of others, distinct altogether from the pleasure we have in any material benefit that we might receive from them. This last is provided for in a foregoing verse, under the heads of 'distributing to the necessity of saints, and being 'given to hospitality.' But to complete either the code of charity, or the happiness of that society over which it reigns, it is indispensable that the moral should be superadded to the substantial or physical; for certainly apart either from gifts or services, there is enjoyment, and that of the highest order, both in the mere exercise of kind and brotherly affection on the one hand, and in being merely the object of such affection on the other—whether it be that of sympathy with the prosperous, which heightens the felicities; or of sympathy with the afflicted, which alleviates the ills of humanity. It is thus that independently of all aid from the hands, there comes a direct and most precious contribution to the happiness of the species from the hearts of men—and that by instant transition, in the play of their reciprocal emotions from one spirit

to another. The apostle was no stranger to the balsamic virtue, as of some hidden essence or elixir, which lay in this more ethereal part of well-doing. In these days it operated with all the speed and force of a pulsation, throughout the widely extended community of the faithful. "Whether one member suffered, all the members suffered with it; or one member was honoured, all the members rejoiced with it."[1]

The three clauses of the 16th verse serve, we think, to qualify and determine the meaning of each. The general lesson of the 15th is, that all, and more especially if saints or members of the same Christian society, should, if in like circumstances, be alike sharers of our sympathy. And we are inclined to view the general lesson of the 16th, as being, that these same parties, as all members of the Christian church, should at least in far the highest and noblest distinction of which humanity is capable, have the like place, or be alike sharers in our estimation. We do not regard them as meaning that we should all think the same things, —that we should be of one orthodoxy, or of one opinion in matters of doctrine or theology; but that whatever the diversities of our rank or station might be, we should, on the ground of our common Christianity, hold each other in equal or like estimation. The original presents a counterpart between the 'each other' of the first clause, and the 'yourselves' of the third, which coupled in each with the same radical word, impresses the idea that when taken together, they signify that we should

[1] 1 Corinthians, xii, 26.

mutually hold each other in the same estimation, and not confine our estimation to ourselves.[1] If in Philip. ii, 3, we are told that in lowliness of mind each should esteem other better than themselves—in this place, and to our minds it gives the precise sense of the passage, we are told that each should esteem other at least as good as themselves. And in keeping with this view, we are disposed to think that in the middle clause they are not men of low estate to whom we are bidden condescend, but low or humble things that we are bidden be content with. Do not aspire after high things, but consent to be evened with low things. Honour all your fellow-Christians, and that alike on the ground of their common and exalted prospects. When on this high level, do not plume yourselves on the insignificant distinctions of your superior wealth or superior earthly consideration of whatever sort. Rather let the rich rejoice in that he is made low; and thus let the monopoly of honour, or self-respect, give way to the respect of each other. We do not lose the benefit of the precept in our version —'condescend to men of low estate'—by our substitution of things for men. He who for the sake of the gospel can put up with low things, with poverty and all its humble accommodations, will not refuse to associate with Christian men, who are lovers and followers of the gospel, because of their poverty.

[1] Το αυτο εις αλληλους φρονουντες, and Μη γινεσθε φρονιμοι παρ εαυτοις.

LECTURE XCI.

ROMANS, xii, 14, 17—21.

"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not....Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

The apostle does not satisfy himself with pressing home upon his converts the duties which they owe to each other; but in the verses now read, teaches them further how they should walk towards them who are without—and this, as Christians at that time formed a suffering and outcast society in the world, was tantamount to telling them, how they should conduct themselves to enemies who heaped upon them all sorts of injury, even to the length, if they could have achieved it, of their extermination. The subject therefore of the passage before us, is the right treatment, not of friends, but of adversaries—that great peculiarity in the ethics of the gospel, which conflicts most perhaps with the natural tendencies of the human heart; and by which it is most distinguished from all those moral systems which are of merely human origin.

This brings us to the consideration of what has often been advanced in argument, though not so

much by speculative infidels as by worldly men, against what they deem to be the utterly romantic and impracticable morality of the New Testament —as if it were so transcendentally above the powers of our nature, that it were altogether hopeless to think of realising it in practice. It is not so much for a controversial object that we propose to meet this alleged difficulty, as for the purpose of doing away a certain mistaken sense of it in the minds even of honest and aspiring disciples, who are bent on the perfection of gospel obedience, but yet are paralysed in their efforts to attain it, by the felt impossibility of such precepts, or of such performances rather, as are here enjoined by the apostle; and had indeed been prescribed, and in still higher terms, by the Saviour before him, who bids us not only do good to our enemies, but even love our enemies—not only to render them acts of beneficence with the hand, but, far more arduous achievement, to mould our hearts into such a union with foes and persecutors, as to bear a positive regard or affection towards them—Thereby aggravating ten-fold the hardships of the Christian obedience, just as it is all the more difficult to command the sensibilities or emotions of the inner, than it is to command the movements of the outer man. It is obvious that we shall not succeed in disposing of this objection to the morality of the gospel, but on the strength of such considerations as might serve not only for the adjustment or satisfaction of a speculative difficulty, but for the practical guidance of those who are pressing onward to the things which are before, through every obstacle in the work and walk of their sanctification.

For this purpose it is not enough to tell us in the general, that what is impossible with man is possible with God—for that with Him all things are possible. Neither is it enough to tell us of the Spirit given to our prayers, that He might help our infirmities and enable us to do all things. Nothing can be more true and nothing more important than these announcements; and indeed they may be said to form the reasons of the apostle John for his assertion, that the commandments are not grievous—even that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; or, as he expresses it elsewhere, Greater is He that is in us; than he that is in the world—greater is the Spirit of God than the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience. All this is most true; but then we are not to imagine of the Spirit, that in making man the subject of His operations, He thwarts or overbears the laws of man's moral machinery. He does not make inroad and innovation on the order and working of the human faculties. In particular, He does not repeal the affinity which obtains in the way of cause and effect between the view of a certain object in the mind, and the counterpart feeling or emotion awakened thereby in the heart. He does not thus traverse the fitnesses of things. For example, did He wish to fill the soul with a sense of beauty, it would be by sights or images of beauty, and not by sights or images of deformity. Did He wish to excite our compassion, it would not be by turning our thoughts on a scene of enjoyment, but on a scene of distress. Did He wish to disarm us of our anger, it would not be by causing us to dwell

in memory on the injustice that we had suffered, but by the power of other considerations—fitted, and let me add, naturally fitted, to call forth other and better sensibilities. And so if He wanted us to love, even to love an enemy, it would be by the presentation to our notice of an object proper to be loved; and most certainly that object can never be moral turpitude—so as that we should look on the enemy who has evinced fraud or falsehood in the dealings that we have held with him, with aught like the love of moral complacency. These are still very general explanations; but general as they are, we hope it may appear already, that it is not a mere theoretical explanation on which we are now to enter—but such as might help to set you on the right way for carrying the precepts of our text into accomplishment, and direct you aright for this purpose what you are to do and how you are to turn yourselves.

Our first remark then is, that the apostle in these verses, does not, immediately or expressly at least, enjoin how we are to feel towards enemies and persecutors, but what we are to do for them. It is action, not affection that he here speaks of—not the dispositions of the heart, but the deeds of the hand; and if it be a more practicable thing that we should compel ourselves to right bodily performances, than call up right mental propensities—this might alleviate somewhat our dread of these precepts, as if they were wholly unmanageable or incompetent to humanity. Before then taking cognizance of what should be the inward temper of Christians to those who maltreat or oppress them, we would bid you remark that the outward conduct

to them is that which forms the literal subject-matter of the commandments here given. The disciples are in this place told, that, whatever the inward risings of nature might be against those who injure and oppress, they are to utter no imprecations, but blessings upon their head—praying for those who despitefully use them: And that however nature might incline them to resent, they are at least not to retaliate—recompensing to no man evil for evil: And that, hard as it may be under their cruel provocations, to keep unruffled minds and feel peaceably, they, as much as in them lies, are to live peaceably: And that, however nature might prompt the desires of vengeance, they must wholly abstain from the deeds of vengeance—leaving these to Him whose rightful province it is, and who hath said that He will repay. Nay they are wholly opposite deeds which we are called on to perform—to feed our enemy if he hunger, and give him drink if he thirst—So that while it may not be the tendency of nature so to desire, our bidden obligation is so to do—for in so *doing* thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Finally, we are not to be overcome of evil; but if his treatment of us have been evil, our treatment of him must be good. In short, these various duties are set before us, more as virtues of forbearance, than as so many virtues of forgiveness; and to understand the distinction between these, the one should be looked to as bearing more of reference to the heart, and the other to the conduct. Forgiveness to be complete must be cordial, or rather if not cordial, it is not forgiveness at all. One can imagine forbearance

from all retaliation by the hand, even while the heart tumultuates and suffers all the agitations of a fierce internal war under the brooding sense of wrong. This distinction perhaps might serve to allay in some degree our fear of being laid in this passage under a wholly impracticable requirement —seeing that in its first and most obvious aspect, it speaks not so much of the inward will that we should cherish towards enemies, as of something more under control, our outward walk and conversation towards them.

But we must not disguise that acts, when but looked to in themselves, and apart from the affections which may have prompted them, like mere bodily exercise, profit but little. Grant that the duties here set before us, when viewed literally, are nothing more than deeds of forbearance. Yet we must not forget, that in every Christian virtue there is a spirit as well as a letter, and that according to the moral estimate of the gospel, the letter without the spirit is dead. And indeed on this very lesson of forbearance, it is well that we can refer to the express quotation of "forbearing one another in love."[1] There is something more then enjoined on the followers of Jesus, than a resolute abstinence from those deeds of hostility by which an injured man seeks to retaliate upon his adversary. He must not have the feeling of hostility against him. It is not enough that he worketh no ill. He must have the charity or love that worketh no ill; and not only that worketh no ill to his neighbour, but it must be in the spirit of love that he worketh no ill to his enemy. But to come at

[1] Ephesians, iv, 2.

once to the duty in all its extent and all its arduousness, the distinct requirement laid on us by the Saviour is, that we should love our enemies. If ere we can make this out, we must make war with the most urgent propensities of nature—it is a warfare from which there is no discharge; and the question still remains, not only by what power (for this can be answered generally, and with the most perfect doctrinal or theological soundness, by replying, the power of the Spirit,) but, more than this, by what process, by what series of mental exercises on the part of the disciple, is the high spiritual achievement carried, of love, real inward cordial love, even to our deadliest enemies, to those who hate and calumniate and oppress and betray us?

To allege the doctrine of the Spirit in a merely general and unintelligent way, will not suffice for this explanation. It is no function of His to obliterate or confound the distinction between one virtue and another; and should we confound them in our thoughts, this might land us in a difficulty from which even He, so long as the misunderstanding continues, may not extricate us. That He can extricate us is a thing most certain—that He will extricate us is a thing to be hoped and prayed for. But then His very first step will be so to enlighten us in the knowledge of God's will, as to remove this misunderstanding—so as that we shall not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. To be fully equipped for the work of obedience, it seems indispensable that, in the language of the apostle, we should be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual

understanding—for then only shall we walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Even to begin aright the work of obedience, we must begin with knowledge—for ere we can do our duty, we must surely be first made to know what it really is; or ere we can rightly address ourselves to the work of practical Christianity, we must know what the things are which God actually requires of us. To make this plain by an example, let us recur to the two virtues already spoken of—those of forgiveness and forbearance. By forbearance I understand that we abstain from all retaliation on an enemy, whether he repents or not—whereas forgiveness, as I understand it, presupposes repentance. It is true that in many places of Scripture, forgiveness is enjoined briefly and absolutely, without any express notice of repentance as the condition or necessary accompaniment thereof. But then one part of Scripture qualifies another; and as to be spiritually wise we must compare spiritual things with spiritual—so to be scripturally wise, we must compare scriptural things with scriptural. If thy brother trespass against thee rebuke him, and if he repent forgive him. This establishes the need of repentance in him whom we are required to forgive; and in so doing it alleviates our sense of difficulty —just as in another case, when we are told by one evangelist that they who *have* riches shall hardly enter the kingdom of God, there is a certain sense of relief from a feeling of the unattainable and the hopeless, when told by another evangelist, that they who *trust* in riches shall hardly enter that kingdom —a distinct and additional relief from that which

we experience in the general announcement of both evangelists, even that though impossible with men, it is possible with God. It is a great matter to be precisely informed both of the actual thing to be done, and of the circumstances in which, as a duty, it is required of us. Now in the grace of forgiveness there is something more than an abstinence from revengeful deeds, or even from revengeful inclinations. Forgiveness from the heart implies more than this—not only that we should forget the injury, but that we should have the same feeling towards its author, be restored to the same state of mind in regard to him, as if the injury had never been committed. That the forgiveness be complete, that it be perfect and entire wanting nothing, we should look on him, not merely with the same sense of security, but even with the same moral complacency as if he were a faultless man—viewing him just as we should have done, that is, with the same confidence and esteem, as if the offence had been blotted altogether out of our recollection, or as if he himself had never been an offender. Now to feel thus on our part, we should hold repentance upon his part to be wholly indispensable—or that repentance is as indispensable to forgiveness, as the element of light is to vision. The Spirit, in the working of miracles, might cure a man of his blindness, but we never expect that He will enable him to see in the dark; and no more should we expect that He will enable us to rejoice over the resolutely and contemptuously impenitent—just as we might rejoice, after we had fully readmitted him to friendship and respect, over the sinner who hath

repented. We might abstain from the acts of retaliation, even under all the provocations which in the state of his hardihood and defiance, we suffer at his hands. But this is forbearance only—not forgiveness. To have the full affection of forgiveness, such a forgiveness as the father of the returning prodigal extended so promptly and freely to his son, the hardihood must be dissolved and done away; the defiance be no longer persisted in. There is a difference between forbearance and forgiveness; and in adaptation to this, there is a counterpart difference between the objects of these two virtues. And the whole differenee seems to lie in this, that the one has not repented—the other has, or at least stands with the profession and the aspect of repentance before us. We do not think that even the Spirit, who is given to help our infirmities, ever helps or enables us to forgive in any other circumstances than these. His great office is that of restoring us to the likeness of God, or making us perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. Now though He be a God ready to forgive, His forgiveness is only to the penitent. Under the economy of grace, the forgiveness of the Sovereign and repentance of the sinner are never separated. And on this footing also are we required to forgive one another, to forgive as God does—so that repentance in every instance is presupposed, when called on, as we are by the apostle, to forgive our fellow-men, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

Now the like explanation applies to the duty of forbearance, or to all the duties of the passage now

before us, which too might be done, we apprehend —not with that violence to our moral nature which is figured by many, and which leads them to view a performance as impracticable—but done sweetly and spontaneously and in the spirit of love. One can imagine a fixed, resolute, and dogged abstinence, if I may so call it, from all the deeds of retaliation —even under provocations and insults the most galling to nature which can be thought of; and this were forbearance in act, or literal forbearance. But in these circumstances to forbear in love, is that which looks so hard of execution, so incongruous with the very frame and constitution of the heart, as shall amount to a moral or mental impossibility. If the Spirit, in acting on the possessor of this heart, do not overbear its mechanism or the law of its workings—then to do away the sense of a difficulty insuperable, when called on to forbear one another, though even our deadliest enemies, in love, something more would require to be said, than merely that what we cannot do of ourselves the Spirit can do in us and for us—something more specific than the bare generality, that though with men it is impossible, with God all things are possible.

And so we have always deemed it a great alleviation of the felt and the feared difficulty, when, attending to the distinction between various kinds of love, we come to understand what the love of forbearance really is. There is no assurance, however strong, of aids and influences from on high, which would ever make us believe it possible, that we should love the man, who in hatred to ourselves does with all falsehood and cruelty inflict upon us

every species of wrong, with the love of moral esteem or moral complacency. To suppose for a moment that the Spirit, in effecting the work of our renovation, would so change our nature as to make us love our enemy thus, were just as great an outrage on the possibility of things, as to suppose that He would change the nature of virtue, would turn evil into good and good into evil. That we should be required to take into our esteem the man who stands palpably before us in the character of a treacherous friend or a blood-thirsty persecutor, is just as conceivable as that we should be required to love the iniquity which God hateth—an achievement this no more to be attempted or thought of, than to hate the righteousness which God loveth. And likeness to Him is the great object of that regenerative process which, under the economy of the gospel, we are made to undergo—so as to make it very sure, that when we suffer from the hand of an enemy, whether he be the calumniator who falsely and ungratefully asperses our name; or the wily practitioner in business or in law, who has designs upon our property; or finally, the blood-thirsty persecutor who lays violence upon our persons—Then we need not try, for really we are not bidden, to love that man with the love of moral complacency.

Still we are required to love even such a man, and if not the love of complacency, what love is it? There is a love distinct from this, even the love of kindness—which when felt towards one in distress, is modified into the love of compassion. Of its operation in the breast, apart from the love of moral esteem, we have a high example in the breast

of the Godhead—when He so loved the world, as to send His only-begotten Son into it. What then precisely was that love of which the apostle speaks, when he says—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"? It could not be the love of moral complacency, for it was love to a world lying in wickedness. It was the love of compassion, and of compassion on creatures arrayed in enmity and lifting up the cry of rebellion against Him. Because of their wickedness it could not possibly be the love of complacency; but because of their wretchedness it was the love of pity: And the enquiry is—Whether, while there is a like impossibility in our regarding with aught of moral esteem a dishonest or a despiteful adversary—whether still there might not be a something about him fitted to engage our sympathies on his behalf, so as not only to restrain our hand from all mischief against him, but so as that we could not find it in our heart to do him harm—nay so as to make it abundantly possible that we should both pity and should pray for him.

And now that we have got clear of this impracticable element, for we really cannot love morally a wicked adversary—the thing with man is impossible, and though with God all things are possible, yet this most assuredly is an impossibility over which even His Spirit will not help us—but now that this difficulty has been set aside, and it is granted that in the case of a deceitful and malicious enemy, there is nothing in his character because of which we can love him morally—still might

there not be something in his state because of which we can love him kindly, love him compassionately? It might be true that we cannot at present forgive —for as yet there might be no symptom of repentance on his part; but in the career of a resolved impenitence may he be fully set, either on the artifices of a hostile policy or on the cruelties of a hostile violence against us. And it might also be true, that *in his present state*, we can find nothing to compassionate—for he might be prospering in his way, and in the hey-day of success be rejoicing in his iniquitous triumph over us. But though there be nothing palpable to the eye of sense which can move our pity, it is for the Christian to look onward and with an eye of anticipation to the things, which, if he be not previously visited with the spirit of repentance, shall happen to him shortly—to the agonies of his coming death-bed, when, a helpless and a prostrate creature, all triumph shall be gone—Or to the still more awful day of his last reckoning, when he shall stand a naked and a trembling culprit before the dread judgment-seat—Or, looking on him in the light of eternity to the never-ending period of that vengeance, which it is for God alone to minister, and from which therefore He bids us refrain our own hand. Did we but realize all this, then should we find, that though we cannot yet forgive, yet even now might we forbear, and that in the midst of cruellest provocation—forbear in love too, for though to the tyrant or the tormentor the love of complacency might be impossible, yet is it possible to love even him with tenderest compassion, as we behold in perspective the sentence and with it the tremendous sufferings which await him.

Thus at all times, and even in the worst imaginable case, might the love of forbearance and pity be practicable; and there are even cases, though not of conscious or resolved iniquity, yet of blind infuriated violence, in which an outlet is given for the higher love of forgiveness. There are cases of ignorance. It was on this ground that Paul obtained mercy though a persecutor, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. This too was the palliation which Peter alleged for the murderers of our Saviour—"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" —"for had they known it," it is said elsewhere, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." It is in striking accordance with this—and it serves to establish on the highest authority the need of certain prerequisites in the objects of forgiveness—that our Saviour prays thus amid the agonies of His crucifixion—"Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do.*"

But the duties of our present text are those of forbearance; and though it should be forbearance in love, yet is there no incompatibility between the object and its counterpart emotion. For we are expressly bidden look forward to the vengeance which awaits our persecutors, when we are bidden abstain from all vengeance ourselves; and there is no such incompatibility, we repeat, between the sight of a creature in torment and our love of pity, as there is between the sight of a creature doing palpable iniquity, and our feeling as complacently towards him as we should towards an innocent or deserving man. The requirement here laid upon

us inflicts no jar, or felt infraction on any law of our nature. True, it calls for a strenuous effort; but this is mainly and properly an effort of consideration, which as being on things future and unseen, is an effort of faith. It is the effort of a mind looking forward to the day of retribution, to the dread realities of a coming judgment and coming eternity. That in the strength of this faith we can forbear and love and pity and pray for even our deadliest enemies, and are thus enabled to lay an arrest on the most urgent propensities of aggrieved and suffering nature—is a glorious verification of the power ascribed to faith in the New Testament. It is in truth our great instrument by which to achieve the sublimest moralities of the gospel. For not only doth it work by love, but overcometh the world. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is not overcome of evil, but gains the noblest of all victories over a world lying in wickedness, by overcoming its evil with good.

We must now quit the general argument; and finish our lecture by a very few explanatory remarks on the two or three verses of this passage which seem to call for them.

In the 17th verse it may appear somewhat out of place, as not altogether in keeping with the subject-matter of the other precepts, when the apostle tells his disciples to provide things honest in the sight of all men. But the truth is, that nothing is more graceful in the eyes of others than the grace of forbearance; and nothing more fitted to engage the sympathy of by-standers, than a mild and patient demeanour under injuries, more especially if it be the obvious effect of conscience and not of

cowardice, not a pusillanimous surrender of oneself to the insolence of oppression, but an act of obedience to the high behests of principle. It is thus that in early times, the Christian religion was indebted for much of its progress to the gentleness of converts under persecution; and so among the other sustaining forces which upheld in the breasts of these devoted men, the charity that endureth all things, was there the exalted motive of adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour, that it may find a growing esteem and readier acceptance in the world.

In the 18th verse it is evidently supposed that it might not be possible even for the best of Christians, and that it might not lie within the capacities of his moral system, to live peaceably with all men. He must first be pure and then peaceable; and till the first object is secured, it is his part not to acquiesce but to contend earnestly. And then as to what lies in him, let me state, by way of one example, that it is not in him to look complacently on moral evil. He cannot though he would; and neither will the Spirit help him to this, or put this in him. And thus he might forbear, though he cannot justify—even though his enemy should seek for more than toleration, should seek an express approval or vindication at his hands. This he cannot do with truth or honour, and therefore will not do at all; and hence a contest which he cannot heal, or one case among others which could be named in which peace is impossible.

In the 19th verse we are told to give place unto wrath—not to our own wrath, for this we are forbidden, just as elsewhere we are forbidden to give place unto the devil. We must not give range or

licence to any resentful feelings of our own; but the meaning is—either that we give place to the wrath of our enemy, not resisting but rather giving way before him: Or, that we leave the matter to God, and do not preoccupy by any vengeance of ours, that vengeance which it is for Him alone to inflict—and so commit ourselves to Him who judgeth righteously.

And lastly, by heaping coals of fire on the head of an enemy, we should understand, that in returning him good for evil, and persisting in this till we shall have heaped our kindnesses upon him—it will either melt his spirit into another and a gentler mood; or, failing this, it will aggravate his condemnation.

In conclusion let me observe, that persecution may again revisit these lands; or though not, that still in ordinary life, under the domestic roof, or amid the familiar dealings of human society, there is ample scope for the wrongs and the heart-burnings of most grievous injustice, and therefore full and constant opportunity for the exercise of those virtues which are here prescribed to us. By the sacrifice of our natural interests, or what is still more difficult, as being at times well nigh uncontrollable, by the sacrifice of our natural resentments, we prepare the way for those highest of all conquests in the world, the conquests of principle. We set forth the graces of personal Christianity, and exhibit it to men both in the most sublime and the loveliest of its aspects. It is not when we are buffeted for our faults and take it patiently, but when we suffer for well-doing and take it patiently—it is then that the glory of religion is advanced upon the earth. Then it is that we are both acceptable to God and approved of men.

LECTURE XCII.

ROMANS, xiii, 1–7.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

THERE are certain speculatists in social and political philosophy, who would measure the duty of subjection by what they are pleased to imagine the right of sovereignty, and would make the one depend upon the other—so that there shall be no incumbent loyalty on the one side, unless there is a legally constituted government on the other. And thus to make out the obligation of subjects, they would go back on the theory of an original compact, and carry us upward to the first construction of society, and tell us of rights elective and rights hereditary; and on the basis of certain juridical dogmata, would assign how much or how little it is that the individual members of a community owe in the way of allegiance to the actual rulers, who,

whether rightfully or not, yet really and by actual possession and exercise bear authority over them. It has long appeared to us, that the Bible cuts short all this reasoning, in that while it defines the duty of the subject, it does not define the nature or composition of the government to which that duty is owing. It does not say that we should be subject to the powers which were rightly originated or have been rightly constituted, but subject to the powers that be. It is not the kind or character of any government, but the existence of it which invests it with its claim on our obedience, or at least which determines for us the duty of yielding subjection thereunto. Its mandates should be submitted to, not because either law or justice or respect for the good of humanity presided over the formation of it, but simply because it exists. It is true that the apostle affirms of those powers to which he requires our subjection, that they are ordained of God; but this is merely because they are the powers that be, and in the sense that whatever is is ordained of God. It is He who overrules all history; and to His sovereign will do we refer the rise and continuance of all the actual dynasties in our world—although in their establishment, fraud and force and barbaric cruelty, and that wrath of man which He so often makes to praise Him, may have been the instruments of His pleasure. It is thus that the duty of our text is of universal application, whatever be the country, and amid all the political diversities which obtain on the face of our globe—insomuch that the Christian who lives in Turkey or China or under any of the iron despotisms of the

East, is as much bound to obedience by this unexcepted law of the New Testament, as if his lot were cast in those more favoured regions of civilization and equitable rule, where all the caprices and the cruelties of arbitrary power are unknown.

And to this order of actual power in the world, there seems a perfect analogy in the order of this world's property. No one thinks of remounting to a distant antiquity—so as to take a view of its origination, or to ascertain in how far justice presided over the first distribution of it, and conducted it onward through its successive descents and exchanges to the hands of its actual occupiers. What is true of the powers that be, holds also true of the properties that be. The same deference is rendered to both of them—and that too in the utter ignorance of every other claim than actual existence or actual possession. Such is the strength indeed of this felt possessory right, that both law and nature do like obeisance to it; and many thousands are the estates seized upon in days of marauding violence, the boundaries of which are as sacred from encroachment, as if they had been fixed in an assembly of righteous sages, or by the awards of a judgment-seat. It is better that the embers of long past injustice should be extinguished, or the wrongs of other centuries be forgotten—than that they should so fester and be kept alive, as to perpetuate and accumulate the heart-burnings of the world, or unsettle the present order of society. It is thus that both our subjection to the actual powers, and our acquiescence in the actual properties which are upon the earth, seem to rest on the same foundation

of divine wisdom—whether as put forth in the lessons of revelation, or as manifested in that constitution of humanity which God hath given to us.

And let it not be said, that by this doctrine of an entire unconditional passiveness, oppression and injustice must at length have unlimited sway upon the earth. God hath provided a security against this in the reactions of outraged nature. But still it is nature which both prompts and executes the resistance; and not Christianity, the disciples of which in their simple, self-denying, and elevated walk of duty, but act in the spirit of their high calling, when they abandon this and many more such offices to others; or when, in the language of our Saviour's injunction, they leave the dead to bury their dead. And God will not leave them to suffer for their meekness and forbearance even in this world, but will gloriously accredit every promise and every declaration which He has made in their favour. It is a manifold experience, we believe, in private life, that the humble and the patient and the long-suffering, as if shielded by an invisible defence against all violence from without, do walk more safely and more prosperously than others through the world; and on a large scale too will the same experience be verified—insomuch as to be found both morally and historically impossible, that a tyrant shall long bear the rule over a Christianised nation.

It is hoped that by these preparatory remarks we have anticipated the necessity of entering much into detail upon the verses of this passage.

Ver. 1. 'The powers that be are ordained of God,'

because not only with His permission, but by His providence in the sovereign disposal of all things, they have been established in the world.

Ver. 2. 'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.' The lesson of our last lecture graduates into the lesson of our present one by a nearer and more natural transition than a cursory reader may apprehend. You were then told to resist not persons, you are now told to resist not powers. The one non-resistance was a duty, even when assailed by unlawful violence; and how much more then is the other non-resistance a duty, when the mandates of a rightful authority are brought to bear upon us—for in every country, the authority in force at the time being, or the authority of its actual recognised government, is the ordinance of God. The existing property and the existing power are both of them the ordinances of God, who, in the progress of events under His own absolute direction and control, hath determined for every man the bounds of his habitation. It were by the violation of one commandment, if we encroached on the property; and it were the violation of another to resist the power. There is a certain metaphysical jurisprudence which hath mystified, and would attempt to subvert, both of these obligations. But Scripture is alike clear and alike imperative with each of them; and its dictates, we are persuaded, will be found best to accord with the real philosophy of human nature, as well as with the peace and good order of human society.

Ver. 3–5. 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.' The apostle speaks not only of the proper design, but we are persuaded also of the general and actual effect of all government. We believe that in every land, the institution, even when administered by the most hateful of tyrants, is productive of good upon the whole. It is true, that in the career of savage and ambitious despots bent on personal aggrandisement; and in whose hands crime is the familiar instrument of conquest, whether over the thrones of other nations or the liberties of their own—it is most true, that in their career we read of little else than of those sufferings and sad disorders which history has so often recorded in characters of blood. Still in every such economy, we mean of laws with power for the enforcement of them, we hold that there is an immense preponderance of good to society—insomuch that the worst of governments will bear to be contrasted with a state of anarchy. Like every other property or power, whether of mental or material nature, it is in the hands of wicked men, occasionally, nay often perverted from its own proper and beneficent end—yet notwithstanding this, and apart from this, it, in its own

essential character is a pre-eminent blessing to the world. Amid all its conspicuous aberrations, we must not forget the many thousand benefits, which, beyond the reach of sight or of calculation, it works in each little vicinity and throughout the mass and interior of every nation, in the maintenance of peace and equity between man and man—a mighty interest this, which it is never the policy of any government to contravene; and seldom, if ever, the wish even of the most capricious and blood-thirsty tyrant, whose ambition would in no conceivable way be subserved by the dissolution of all the social ties in that community over which the providence of God has placed him. Let but the controlling and regulating power wherewith he is invested cease from its operation; and the vast importance of such a power for the general well-being would soon be felt, after that society had fallen to pieces, and without a king or without a government, each man did that which was right in his own eyes. Verily law or government is the minister of God for good; and, in the great bulk and majority of their doings the administrators thereof are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. If then we have just been taught in the former passage to resist not evil, when assailed by the unbridled violence of evil men, how much more should we abstain from the resistance of that which is good, even of that government under which we live, and which is God's own ordinance—and whose function it is to protect us from evil. For, generally speaking, rulers are not as individuals often are—who, at the instigation of envy or avarice or hatred, may at times do gross-

est injury to the righteous. The loyal and peaceable have nothing to fear from laws which they do not offend; but if ever brought before the judgment-seat, to be taken cognisance of by these, will obtain sentence of acquittal or justification at their hands. They are the evil, the criminal, who need to be afraid—for the very design of a civil government in society, which is at once the effect and evidence of God's moral government in the world,[1] is to repress and punish all such. His institution will not be frustrated, or fail of that express purpose for which it has been set up among men, which is not only to protect the innocent, but to execute vengeance on the evil-doer—being armed with the power of the sword to fulfil the resentment which it feels against the disobedient. Did our attention stop short at the secondary ordinance, did we look no higher than to the judge or the magistrate—even then, to shun their wrath, we should yield subjection to government and law; but when we rise upward from the earthly to the heavenly Sovereign, and with the apostle view the authority that is beneath as an emanation or derivation from the authority of Him who ruleth over all—then will our subjection be rendered, not alone from fear towards man, but also from conscience towards God.

Ver. 6, 7. 'For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.' The apostle now passes from the

[1] See Butler's Analogy.

institution of law in the general, to the institution of tribute, and which he here singles out as part and parcel of the same, and as therefore too coming directly from God—the payment of which, therefore, we should not only render as a thing of force that we must do, but as a thing of conscience that we ought to do. It is a lesson greatly needed in this our day—that the payment of our taxes should be held as much a matter of principle and punctuality as the payment of our debts. Indeed it is regarded by the apostle as quite on the footing of a debt, being included by him in the general precept of Render unto all their dues. It is a lesson altogether worthy of strenuous and repeated enforcement from the pulpit—from which there ought to be exposed and denounced with all fidelity, the shameful laxity which obtains in this department of moral obligation. It is a most befitting topic for the ministrations of a clergyman; and it were well could he lay open with a vigorous and faithful hand, the frauds, the concealments, the dexterous and unprincipled evasions which are often practised to the injury of the public revenue —and by men too who acquit themselves honourably and with perfect fairness of all their private engagements. There is a hebetude of conscience on this subject which needs the quickening of an earnest and solemn and scriptural representation. This were not to secularise religion; but, what is mainly wanted, it were to sanctify the business of human life. Whatever can be fixed upon as a test of religious sincerity, must be deemed peculiarly valuable, both by the minister who feels it his busi-

ness to hold up, and that in all its features and details, a true picture of Christianity to his hearers; and also by all honest disciples, who, intent on their own personal sanctification, press onward to the high object of standing perfect and complete in the whole will of God. That is a fatal error which would dissever the social from the sacred; or which looks in the great amount of them on the moralities of human conduct, though specified and prescribed in the Bible, merely in the light of so many week-day proprieties. It is now high time that Christianity should stand forth in another aspect, and that another exhibition of it should be given to the world—not as a system of cabalistic dogmata, but as a pervading and living principle, which takes ascendancy over the whole man, and graves upon the tablet of his character all that is lovely and honourable and virtuous and of good report. This is the way to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things—not to dissociate religion from morality, but to impregnate morality with religion, and make it out and out the guide and the sovereign of all our actions. We are aware that a certain feeling of the strange and even of the ludicrous is often awakened, when such topics are handled graphically and experimentally in the pulpit, as purloining, and eye-service, and fair-dealing, and the full and regular payment of taxes—or when men of various conditions are plainly spoken to on the duties of their respective callings, as household servants or field-labourers or artizans or men in the walks of business, when severally addressed on the virtues of the shop and the market and the ex-

change and the counting-house. Now all this proceeds on an utter misconception as to what sort of thing Christianity is; and because of which we forget that godliness has to do with all things—insomuch that ere a disciple can be perfected into a complete man of God, he must be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He must be a good family man, and a good neighbour, and a good member of society; and finally, to return on the observations which the apostle here lays upon his converts, he must be a good subject, in which capacity he will pay custom or tribute with cheerfulness, and reverence his superiors, and award his comely and complaisant homage to station and rank in society—and, giving fear to whom fear is due, will first and foremost, in the words of another apostle, "fear God;" and honour to whom honour, he will follow out the injunction of the same apostle, to "honour the king;" and will obey magistrates; and live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This is the way of making his light shine before men—so that seeing his good works, they may glorify his Father who is in heaven.

A government in the discharge of its ordinary functions is a great blessing to Society; and it is upon this consideration that the duties of the passage now under review are grounded and enforced by the apostle. But a government may depart from its proper and ordinary character; and, instead of a protector, may become a tyrant and a persecutor. It may abuse its powers. The sword of justice in its hands, it may wield as an instrument of iniquitous violence—turning it from its

own righteous purpose, as an instrument of vengeance on rebels and murderers. Instead of this, it may become a murderer itself, and bathe its feet in the blood of the innocent. And the question is, What is duty towards a government in this new attitude and style of acting; and when, no longer a minister to them for good, it becomes an executioner of wrath on the peaceable and the praiseworthy—the terror and scourge of the righteous?

This question has been already answered in the chapter immediately before our present one—where we are told to bless them which persecute, to give place unto wrath, to avenge not ourselves. And it has not only been answered didactically in the Bible, but has been answered historically and by example during three long centuries of persecution—beginning with the Author of our faith, and continued onward to the reign of Constantine. If when the hand of a private individual inflicted outrage and injustice upon them, they were commanded to forbear all retaliation—this forbearance was still more imperative when it was an injustice which came from the hands of the magistrate. And accordingly, in those ages of martyrdom we have a bright verification of the meek and passive moralities—of the virtues which belong to a state of sufferance—so strenuously recommended by the apostle. And it was not only in the feebleness of their infancy, when the Christians formed but a very little flock, amid the overwhelming majorities that abode in the ancient faith, whether of Jews or Gentiles—it was not only then, that they gave themselves quietly up to torture and death, as if in

imitation of their great Master, who was led like a lamb unto the slaughter—But even in the strength and maturity of their manhood, when they far outnumbered their adversaries, and could have taken the power of government into their own hands—even then do we read of their weathering in meek endurance the last and bloodiest of those great persecutions which they had to undergo. They might have risen against their enemies, and achieved over them the victory of force—but, still more glorious, theirs was altogether the victory of principle; and it serves for our admonition, on whom the latter ends of the world have come. Should the fires of persecution be again lighted up in our land—in the holy discipline of God, should this be again brought to bear upon us, as at once the test and the exercise of our Christianity—after such an example, and still more with such a lesson as the apostle has recorded for our guidance in the foregoing passage, we should know how to acquit ourselves. We should, for conscience toward God, endure the grief and suffer wrongfully. We should take it patiently. We should commit ourselves to Him that judgeth righteously. We should leave to Him the cause of our redress, and that work which is exclusively His own, the work of vengeance. If we want to obtain a like conquest with our predecessors in the church, then not overcome of evil ourselves, we should overcome the evil with good.

Still in the very passage from which we have borrowed some of these expressions, there is a limitation imposed on our duty of 'living peaceably with all men.' This is only if it be possible and as

much as lieth in us. Now we have already stated in what circumstances it might not be possible to yield a pacific acquiescence in the will of a private individual—so that if he is resolutely bent on our compliance with it, a rupture between us is wholly unavoidable. We could not, for example, give up our conscience into his hands, or renounce a profession or a principle which we conceive to have been laid upon us by the authority of God. And thus it was that the apostles' converts could not have given up their Christianity at the bidding of friends or relatives—a fertile cause of dissension in these days; and so as to verify the forewarning of our Saviour, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And if they would not submit in this matter to a relative or neighbour, they could as little submit in it to a magistrate. They could not belie their own faith, or say of what they did believe, that they did not believe it. There is the same impossibility here which is even affirmed of the Godhead, when it is said of Him that He cannot lie, and that it is impossible for God to lie. If the faith of the gospel was indeed in them, then it lay not in them, nor was it possible for them to abjure that faith. Nay, as if to aggravate the moral impossibility, they could not, at the bidding of the highest power on earth, make the denial of Christ, but in opposition to an express bidding

from the highest power in heaven, by which they were required to confess Him before men—even when delivered up to councils and brought before governors and kings for a testimony. And what had thus been laid upon them by precept, they exemplified in practice—as when called before the rulers of Israel, and straitly threatened and commanded not to teach or preach in the name of Jesus, they replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot," and here is their express allegation of its not being possible for them to live peaceably with all men, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And so with boldness they continued to speak, "not as pleasing men but God"—and this under the necessity which was laid upon them, for woe was upon them if they preached not the gospel.[1] To the superficial it might appear an anomaly, nay a contradiction, that the same Christians who were charged with the duty of resisting not evil, should nevertheless have resisted so sturdily upon this occasion; and it seems to deepen still more the inconsistency, that it was a resistance to the mandates of those rulers, who, as the powers that be, were ordained of God—so that whosoever resisteth them resisteth the ordinance of God—and shall receive to himself damnation. But theirs was not a withholding of fear where fear was due. It was but the subordination of a lower to a higher fear—the fear of him who was able to kill the body, to the fear of Him who was able to destroy both soul

[1] 1 Corinthians, ix, 16.

and body in hell. They did not resist the inflictions of the earthly power on their persons and properties, and all on earth which belonged to them. These they submitted to the absolute disposal of the rulers of this world; and it may serve perhaps the object of a right discrimination in this matter of resistance—if in the following verse where the term is introduced, it be considered what precisely that was which Christians are there spoken of as resisting. The apostle in the Hebrews tells his disciples that they had not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin." This was wholly different from the resistance of war, when the soldier strives against those who are seeking after his blood; and, for the deliverance of his own life, would embrue his hand in the blood of an enemy. This is one way of resisting unto blood; but it is altogether distinct from, nay opposite to, the resistance unto blood which Christians were often called to in these days. The object of their resistance was not to save their own blood by shedding the blood of their enemies. It was not against this that they strove, or against their enemies that they strove. The precise object of their striving was against sin—the sin of renouncing their profession, and thus denying the Lord who bought them. This at all hazards they behoved to resist. Against this, and this alone, they strove; and as to their lordly persecutors, instead of striving against them, they placidly and submissively gave themselves up unto their hands.

And thus too at this moment the Church of Scotland—submitting to the civil power in all that

is civil; and only refusing her obedience, when that power assumes an authority over things sacred. Many are not able, perhaps not willing, to discriminate in this matter; and so, at their hand, she suffers the obloquy of being a rebel against the laws —and this because one of the subordinate courts in our realm, has trangressed her own limits, even as the sanhedrim or supreme court of Judea did theirs, when they forbade the apostles to preach any more in the name of Jesus. It is a great and a vital cause; and has led to a contest which is not yet terminated, and perhaps only begun. Heaven grant an apostolic wisdom, as well as an apostolic boldness, on the part of her ministers—that they may acquit themselves rightly of all which they owe both to God and to Cesar; and so that, while faithful to their Master in heaven, their loyalty to the powers which be on earth may, in all that is possible, and as far as lieth in them, become patent and palpable to all men. Meanwhile, in the eyes of some she may wear the aspect of a refractory member in the body politic, more especially in an age when the principles are forgotten on which our Non-erastian Church is based—principles which at one time the sustained and at length triumphant controversy of several generations, had made as familiar as household words, even to the peasantry of our land. O Lord, may Thy grace and Thy guidance be with the present majority of our Church—so that whether they shall achieve a victory or sustain a defeat, Wisdom may yet be justified of all her children. If theirs be the victory, let it become manifest, O God, that a rightly adm-

nistered, and withal an established church, in the full possession of her spiritual independence, is the great palladium, not of freedom alone, but of stability and good order in the commonwealth. But if it seem good unto Thee that it shall be otherwise, and that defeat and disappointment shall be theirs —we will not let go our confidence in the final and everlasting establishment of Thine own divine supremacy over the nations—when, after it may be the fearful period of a wasteful and wide-spread anarchy, the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LECTURE XCIII.

ROMANS, xiii, 8—10.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

'Owe no man any thing.' This precept of the apostle, limited within these few words, may signify one or other of these two things—either to leave not our debts unpaid; or, higher, and many would say more scrupulous still, never get into debt. The clause now quoted of our present verse may be looked to as a repetition of the clause in that verse which goes immediately before it—"Render unto all their dues"—what is due, (*debitum*, debt,) being the same with what is owing. And in this form too it admits of both the interpretations now given—either let every debt be at length cancelled, or let no debt ever be contracted. Never let it become a debt—Be in no man's books. If he be an individual with whom you are dealing, pay the moment that you buy. Or if it be the government, and so the liability is not a price but a tax, pay on the day that it becomes due. According to the usages of society, the injunction in this latter or more rigorous meaning of it is far from being generally adhered to. Perhaps it may not at all

times suit the conveniences or even the possibilities of business, that each single transaction should be what in familiar phrase is termed a ready-money transation. Perhaps even in the matters of family expenditure, it might save trouble, instead of paying daily and in detail, to pay at certain terms; and so with the consent, nay even the preference of both parties, is there often a running of accounts, and a discharge or settlement of these periodically. We shall not therefore insist very resolutely or dogmatically on this rule of the apostle, in the literal or extreme sense of it. Perhaps it were an over-sensitive casuistry, a sort of ultraism in morals, to urge the unexcepted observance of our text in the very terms of this its second interpretation. There can be no doubt, however, that in the first interpretation of it, it is a matter of absolute and universal obligation. Though we cannot just say with full and perfect assurance, that a man should never in any circumstances get into debt—we can feel no hesitation in saying, that, once in, he should labour most strenuously and with all his might, to get out of it. I will not therefore be so altogether intolerent and peremptory, as to give it forth in the style of an aphorism or dictation—that he should never become a debtor to any man, be it for a single month or even single day. Yet will we proclaim it as a very high and undoubted ethical propriety—that each man, if in business, should so square his enterprises to his means; or, if in whatever else, should so square his expenditure to his income, as to be at all times within the limits of sufficiency or safety—so that, should the computation at any time

be made, and were the settlement of all reckonings and claims whatsoever to take place at the moment accordingly, it be found of him at the very least, that in customary phrase he was even with the world, and so as that he could leave the world and owe no man any thing.

But though unwilling to press the duty of our text in the extreme and rigorous sense of it—yet I would fain aspire towards the full and practical establishment thereof, so as that the habit might become at length universal, not only of paying all debts, but even of making conscience never to contract, and therefore never to owe any. For although this might never be reached, it is well it should be looked at, nay moved forward to, as a sort of optimism, every approximation to which were a distinct step in advance, both for the moral and economic good of society. For, first, in the world of trade, one cannot be insensible to the dire mischief that ensues from the spirit often so rampant, of an excessive and unwarrantable speculation—so as to make it the most desirable of all consummations that the system of credit should at length give way, and what has been termed the ready-money system, the system of immediate payments in every commercial transaction, should be substituted in its place. The adventurer who, in the walks of merchandise, trades beyond his means, is often actuated by a passion as intense, and we fear too as criminal, as is the gamester, who in the haunts of fashionable dissipation, stakes beyond his fortune. But it is not the injury alone, which the ambition that precipitates him into such deep and

desperate hazards, brings upon his own character —neither is it the ruin that the splendid bankruptcy in which it terminates brings upon his own family—These are not the only evils which we deprecate—for over and above these, there is a far heavier disaster, a consequence in the train of such proceedings, of greatly wider and more malignant operation still, on the habit and condition of the working classes, gathered in hundreds around the mushroom establishment, and then thrown adrift among the other wrecks of its overthrow in utter helplessness and destitution on society. This frenzy of men hasting to be rich, like fever in the body natural, is a truly sore distemper in the body politic. No doubt they are also sufferers themselves, piercing their own hearts through with many sorrows; but it is the contemplation of this suffering in masses, which the sons and daughters of industry in humble life so often earn at their hands, that has ever led me to rank them among the chief pests and disturbers of a commonwealth.

But again, if they who trade beyond their means thus fall to be denounced, they especially in the higher and middle classes of life, who spend beyond their means and so run themselves into debt, merit the same condemnation. Perhaps they who buy on credit, certain of their inability to pay, as compared with those who borrow on speculation, and though uncertain of its proceeds, yet count on the favourable chances of success, so as that they shall be able to pay all—perhaps the former are distinctly the more inexcusable of the two. But without entering on this computation, we can imagine no-

thing more glaringly unprincipled and selfish than the conduct of those, who, to uphold their place and take part with their fellows in the giddy rounds of the festive and fashionable world, force out a splendour and luxury which their means are unequal to; and thus either build or adorn or entertain in a style so costly, that it must be done not at their own expence, beggared as they are by extravagance, but at the expence of tradesmen and artificers and shopkeepers, whom they hurry onward to beggary with themselves. I do not need to expatiate on a delinquency so grievous and undeniable as this. But you will at once perceive, how both the rage of speculation, prompted by what the apostle calls the lust of the eye, in the work of making a fortune; and the rage of exhibition and excess, stimulated by the pride of life, in the work of overspending it—the one sowing the wind, and the other reaping the whirlwind—how both of these would be effectually mitigated and kept in check, were all men to act on the sacred prohibition of "Owe no man any thing."

But lastly, there is another application of this precept, to me the most interesting of all—because of all others the application, which if fully carried out, would tell more beneficially than any other on that high object of enlightened philanthropy, the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and so make a larger contribution than any we have yet specified to the well-being of a then happy and healthful society. What I advert to as a thing of pre-eminent worth and importance is, that men in humble life, our artizans, our mechanics, and la-

bourers, should be effectually taught in the art of owing no man any thing; and learn to find their way from the pawn office to the savings' bank—so that, instead of debtors to the one, they should become depositors in the other. That it is not so, is far more due to the want of management than to the want of means; and it needs but the kindness and trouble of a few benevolent attentions to put many on the way of it. It is this which, among other objects, makes it so urgently desirable—that every town should be broken up into small enough parishes, and every parish into small enough districts; and an official superintendant be attached to each, who, in perfect keeping with his character as a deacon, might charge himself with the economics of the poor, and tell them how so to husband their resources, as to save themselves from a sore and heavy burden, which often presses on them like an incubus that they never can shake off—we mean the debt usually contracted at the outset of a family establishment, and which keeps them in a state of difficulty and dependence to the end of their days. It is not to be told how soon and how easily by a few cheap and simple and withal friendly advices, the whole platform of humble life might come to be raised, and the working classes be guided to an enlargement and sufficiency, which, save by dint of their own sobriety and providential habits, can never be realised. Though we cannot offer here the scientific demonstration of this great and glorious result, we may at least be suffered, as an act of homage, to make this acknowledgment in passing—that, in the practical department of Christianity, only second

to our admiration of its perfect ethical system, is the admiration we have ever felt, and the unbounded confidence that we repose in the sound political economy of the New Testament.

'But to love one another.' The apostle here speaks of love as a debt, as a thing owing. 'He would have it to be our only debt; and that this alone is what we should still continue to owe, after having so acquitted ourselves of all other obligations, as to owe nothing else. The point to be remarked upon is, that the apostle should speak of love as a debt at all, as a thing that we owe—thus placing in the same category the duty under which we lie to love one another, as the duty to pay up the price of that which we had bought, or the sum that we had borrowed from him. It is certainly not so regarded in the light of natural conscience. We should never think that we did the same injustice to a neighbour by withholding our love from him, as we did to a creditor by withholding from him the payment of a debt. In that play or reciprocation of moral feeling and moral judgment which takes place between men and men in society, these two things are not so confounded. It is true that should God interpose with the commandment that we should so love, we owe every thing to Him; and would therefore, on this being intimated to us as His will, owe love to those who are around us, and love to all men. But we at present speak of our natural sense of justice, as it decides and operates irrespectively of God's will in a community of human beings; and are considering how it would pronounce on the matter of obligation—between the duty of paying an ordinary debt, and the duty of loving.

Now we must be conscious of a wide diversity in our moral sensation, if I may so term it, of these two things. I feel that I have a right to the payment of that which is owing to me; and that for the exaction of it I might bring the fear and the force of law to bear upon my debtor. I have no such feeling of a right to his love; and did I assert or prosecute such a right, did I try to seize upon the man's affections in the same way that I might seize upon his goods, did I prefer a claim to his heart, and for the making of it good put either fear or force into operation—there would soon be found an element awanting, and which made this attempt at the compulsion of another's love to be altogether a thing most outrageously and ridiculously wrong. The question still remains then as to any possible analogy between things which at the first blush of them appear so different; and how it is, that while in the most strict and literal sense of the word we owe a man the full value of all that we may have bought or borrowed from him—how it is, that with any propriety or by means of any figurative resemblance, I can be said to owe him my love also.

What gives the strongest impression of a reciprocity in this matter, and brings it nearest to a thing of mutual and equitable obligation is, that celebrated moral sentence of our great Teacher—"Whatsoever things ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Now we all would that men should love us, rather than that they should hate us; and it is a precept which at once announces its own equity, that what we should like from men, we should do to men. If we wish

them to love us, it seems a selfish and unequitable thing, that we should not love them back again; or that we should not be willing to give them that, which we at the same time are abundantly willing to get from them. We do not just say, that, even on this principle, the obligation to love others is placed on the very same footing with the obligation to pay our debts—yet if on this principle we do not strictly and literally *owe* them our love, the moral sense of all men will go along with me when I say, that on this principle we at least *ought* to love them. Surely if we should like all men to love us, it is nothing but a fair and legitimate moral conclusion from this, that we in return should or ought to love all men. Now I would have you attend to the two terms, the *owe* and the *ought*. They have a common origin; and though not absolutely identical, this of itself demonstrates, if human language be at all the interpreter of human feeling, a certain affinity betwixt them. And accordingly they do substantially resemble each other thus far, that both of them—the payment of what we owe to others, and the love we are required to bear them—that both of these are duties. But though generally, and to this extent, they are alike—still there is a difference between them; and on looking narrowly into it, we shall find what the difference is. In the one duty, the payment of debt, there is not merely an obligation upon the one side, there is a precise and counterpart right upon the other—it being not only my duty to pay what I owe to a creditor, but his right to challenge and enforce the payment. In the other duty, the love of a neighbour, it might be

ny obligation thus to love, but not necessarily his right to demand it of me. That there are other such duties, will appear still more clearly from this example—the duty of forgiveness. Here there may be an obligation, and most certainly no corresponding right—an obligation on my part to forgive the offender, while it were a contradiction in terms to say of him that he hath a right to be forgiven. The distinction is quite familiar to ethical writers; and they have had recourse to a peculiar nomenclature for the expression of it. In the one case, as with the virtues of truth and justice, where there is both a duty on the one side and a counterpart right upon the other, they are termed virtues of perfect obligation. In the other case, as with benevolence, whether in the form of mercy or hospitality or almsgiving or a kindness and courtesy beyond the general habits or expectations of any given neighbourhood—these, though all of them virtues in themselves which serve to grace and exalt the giver, yet for which no right or claim can be alleged by the receiver—these are but the virtues of imperfect obligation.

This leads us to observe, that there are two distinct regimens, and both on the side of morality. There is the regimen of fear, and the regimen of conscience. Each might be brought to bear upon man at the same time, when the duty to be performed is one of perfect obligation—which it is not only right for every moral agent to observe; but in which also there is, counterpart to this, the holder of a right, who might by legal enforcement compel the observance of it, whether it be for the payment of a debt or the fulfilment of a promise. On the

side then of one and the same virtue, there might both be the coarser regimen of fear, and the finer regimen of conscience—the one put into operation by a government within the breast, which tells of the right and the wrong, and, by the force of principle alone, persuades to the former, and restrains from the latter—the other put into operation by the government of a country which institutes a law, and ordains its penalties against all the aggressions of injustice. One could imagine a virtuous society where conscience was omnipotent and universal—in virtue of which the government of principle might have perfect and unlimited sway, and so the government of law might be dispensed with. And there are many individuals, whose honour and integrity are full guarantees for their punctual discharge of all the equities of social life; and of whom therefore it may be said that the law is not needed for such righteous persons—of which indeed they often give proof, by the admirable way in which they acquit themselves also of the generosities of social life, those virtues of imperfect obligation, wherewith the law of the heart alone hath to do, and the law of the state or of the statute-book has, or ought to have no concern. But though the law of conscience be sufficient for these, it needs, in the actual state or character of humanity, and for the effectual regulation of the commonwealth at large—it needs to be supplemented by the civil and criminal law of the country. And accordingly both influences might tell at once on the same individual. Both considerations are pressed by the apostle upon his converts—and this by the way proves that the dis-

tinction on which we insist is not a vain one—when he says, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

It is well that you should keep hold of this distinction between a lower and a higher regimen—the regimen of fear, and the regimen of conscience—as it might prepare you for understanding another regimen, even higher than that of conscience; and lead you along to another distinction—we mean the distinction that we now announce between the regimen of conscience and the regimen of love. In every exercise of the conscience, there seems a balancing between the right and the wrong—a comparison of opposites, grounded on the knowledge both of good and evil, whereupon, in virtue of its sense of rectitude, it enjoins a preference for the one, and an avoidance of the other. Now this work of comparison on the part of a moral agent, might as unnecessary be dispensed with—if in doing what is right he always did that which he liked best; or, in other words, if the taste and affections did of themselves prompt, and at all times, that very conduct, which, had the arbitration of conscience been required, it would have pronounced to be our righteous and incumbent obligation. It might seem hard to say that conscience in this case would be superseded—yet there is a certain sense in which it would be true—for it is obvious enough, that if we abandoned ourselves to our own heart's desire, and that desire was ever, spontaneously and of its own full accord, on the side of that which is most righteous and best, the office of conscience, at least for the purposes of guidance or regulation,

would then be uncalled for. And however difficult it might be to say that love would supersede conscience, we need go no farther than to our text for decisive instances of love superseding the commandment. For certain it is; that if we thoroughly loved a neighbour, loved him as we do ourselves, we could no more inflict pain or violence upon him than upon our own persons—no more rob him of his property than cast our own into the fire—no more deceive him by a falsehood than willingly give ourselves up to the wiles of an impostor—no more wish aught desirable thing of his to be ours, than we should aught of ours to be either abstracted or destroyed. To a man thus actuated the prohibitions of kill not, and steal not, and lie not, and covet not, were altogether superfluous—nor would his conscience need at all to ruminate, on the rightfulness, either in respect of matter or authority, of any of these commandments. What under the regimen of conscience would be a thing of obedience —the very same, under the regimen of love, would be a thing of inclination. Love would be an equivalent, nay a greatly overpassing substitute for law. Under its simple and spontaneous impulse, there could be the working of no ill. Of itself it would do the work of all the commandments. Where such an enlargement takes place upon the character of man, the will might with all safety be left to take the place of conscience. The law of God would be his delight; nor could there be any hazard of disobedience at the hands of him, the delight of whose heart lay in the fulfilling of the law.

Now the question comes to be, Which is the

higher moral state—that of him who loves his neighbour as himself, and in virtue of this affection would abstain from doing him any evil; or of him who, without this affection, but in virtue of the commandments, and under a sense not only of their authority, but their rightness, would alike abstain from doing him any evil? Were it because of their authority alone, then the obedience might proceed from an apprehension of the threatened penalties, or be a forced obedience under the regimen of fear. Were it because of their rightness, then would it be a higher, for now a duteous obedience, under the regimen of conscience. But what we ask is, Whether, when not because he thinks of the commandments, but because he realises the saying in which they are briefly comprehended, even loves his neighbour as himself—whether, when it is because of this that he kills not and steals not and lies not and covets not—whether it be not now a still higher, being now a willing obedience under the regimen of love? When he has gotten so far as that love supersedes law, has he not reached a higher stage in this moral progression from one degree of excellence to another?—and were this consideration thoroughly pondered and pursued into all its consequences, might it not serve to elucidate an else mysterious passage of the Bible—where we read that the law was not made for a righteous person, for a person thus far refined and exalted in his principles and feelings—but for those in the ruder or more rudimental and initiatory stages of their moral discipline, and who for the restraint or regulation of their conduct needed that the coarser

appliances of law, its obligations or even its terrors, should he brought to bear upon them? It is thus we might understand the apostolic avermont—"That the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." To this purpose serveth the law. "It was added because of transgressions." Every commandment in the decalogue, with the exception of the fifth—for we do not except the fourth, which tells us *not* to work upon the Sabbath—is of a negative or prohibitory, rather than of a prescriptive character. It tells us not of the things which we are to do, but of the things which we are not to do; and most certainly they are such things, that if the moral dynamics of love to God and love to man had full operation in our heart, we should have no wish for the doing of them.

And yet, as already hinted, we should feel it a hard and difficult thing to say that love might supersede conscience; and so as that the element of moral rightness, or the consideration of what we ought or of what we owe, might never be present to the mind—merely because there reigned an affection there, which formed a sufficient and a practical security for the observance of them. We apprehend that if destitute of the conception or knowledge of the moral character of actions, as right or wrong, we should want an essential feature of

that resemblance to the Godhead, the restoration whereof is one great object of the economy under which we sit[1]—even His admiration of the one and His abhorrence of the other, so that like Him we may love righteousness and hate iniquity. It is true that Adam was interdicted in paradise from the tree of knowledge of good and evil—and therefore that, apart from this knowledge and by the spontaneous tendencies of his own perfect nature, he may have been kept close to the one and altogether clear of the other. But instead of this there was one commandment laid upon him—and by the way a negative one, or not a bidding but a forbidding—even that he should *not* eat of this tree. It was on his transgression thereof that his eyes were opened; and his conscience we have no doubt, his sense of good and evil and of the difference between them, would then come into vigorous play. But we must not therefore imagine that in the process of man's regeneration this sense of good and evil behoves to be extinguished. He will be "renewed in knowledge;" and as a proof that, though heaven be that holy place into which sin doth not enter, yet that the knowledge or conception of sin will be there, is evident from this, that holiness will be there; and what is holiness but the fearful and determined recoil of perfect moral excellence from all that is opposite to itself?—a property of such high estimation, that some would vindicate the origin of evil, on the principle that it afforded a scope for the display and the exercise of holiness. However this may be, certain it is that the love or charity of heaven will not supersede

[1] Colossians, iii, 10.

there the conscience or moral sense, which takes cognisance both of the good and the evil—as manifested both by the song of the redeemed to Him who washed them in His blood, and by their intelligent ascriptions to Him who sitteth on the throne of Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; and Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.

At all events, there seems to be a progression, an ascent by successive stages from a lower to a higher discipline, in the moral education and moral history of our species—whether we comprehend or not the various footsteps of it—As when the spirit of bondage gives way to the spirit of adoption, or the oldness of the letter to the newness of the spirit; or as when the terrors of the law are succeeded by a delight in the law; or as when the commandment, formerly graven on tables of stone, comes to be graven on the fleshly tables of the heart; or as when the law fulfils but the office of a preparatory schoolmaster for bringing men to Christ, or guiding them onward to the higher lessons of the gospel; or finally, as when the supremacy of law makes place for the supremacy of love, even of the charity which never faileth, but abideth and reigneth everlastingly in heaven, after that the means and the preparatives for this great consummation have all vanished away.

"I'm apt to think the man
That could surround the sum of things, and spy
The heart of God, and secrets of His empire,
Would speak but love; with him the bright result
Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
And make one thing of all theology."

LECTURE XCIV.

ROMANS, xiii, 11—14.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

VER. 11. 'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Some commentators would refer the nearer salvation of which the apostle here speaks, to the destruction of Jerusalem, as standing somehow or other connected with a great enlargement to the prosfessors of Christianity. Others again would refer it to the expected second coming of our Lord—in which it is thought that even apostles were not yet so far instructed or inspired, as to be free from the then prevalent imagination that He would shortly revisit the world—nay make His appearance before the present generation had passed away. Without deciding on either of these interpretations, we hold it a sounder, or at least a safer application of the advice here given, to understand the nearer salvation of every disciple, as signifying the greater nearness of his death—seeing of that event, that it is indeed a great salvation to all who fall asleep in

Jesus, for with them to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. When the verse is thus apprehended, it becomes a great and universal lesson, for Christians of all ages, which carries its own obvious recommendation along with it; and is in harmony with many similar injunctions delivered in other places of Scripture—as, Brethren, the time is short, and let us not therefore abuse the world; or Let us work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.

'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.' The clause of 'knowing the time' seems to strengthen one or other of the more special interpretations of this verse—as referring to the knowledge of a something which the Christians of that period had been made to see in the light of prophecy or inspiration, whether the rightly anticipated destruction of Jerusalem or the then misunderstood reappearance of our Saviour. We however shall still keep by the more general meaning that we have already assigned to this verse—understanding it thus, that it is now high time to bestir ourselves, and make diligent preparation for that blissful eternity which is so fast approaching; for that this is the great work to be done, and there remains but little, yea a rapidly lessening time for the doing of it.

But how comes it that Christians should be called upon to awake out of sleep? Are they not already awakened? Did they not at the first outset of their discipleship yield obedience to the apostolic call of "Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light"? Has not every believer already pass-

ed out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel; and why then should he be so urged, as if he had yet to shake himself from the sleep of carnality or spiritual death, or to arouse him out of the lethargy of nature?

It is because of the constant and cleaving earthliness which continues to subsist even after regeneration; and which, though weakened and under process of extinction, is not wholly exterminated while we remain in the body—it is because of this that we need to be reminded even of the incipient calls, and that we need to be put on the incipient duties of the Christian life. Thus it is that to be kept from lapsing into unbelief, we must hold fast the beginning of our confidence; and lest our love should wax cold, we must remember the strength of it at the outset of our discipleship. In a word, we must be ever recurring to the exercises of our first faith, our first love, our first obedience; and more especially should awaken out of sleep, or keep awake, amid the opiates of sense and of a deceitful world.

Thus understood, it is the charge of the apostle, that we should open our eyes to the realities of that unseen world, to which we every day are coming nearer. What he teaches in this verse is the wisdom of considering our latter end, to which we are hastening onward. In order to meet the salvation which then awaits us, our distinct aim should be to perfect our holiness; or to give all diligence that we may be found without spot and blameless; or so to run as to reach the prize of our high calling, and be presented faultless before the presence of God. The salvation here spoken of is

the salvation that we are called upon to work out—a task from which we are not the less exempted, though it be said that God works in us.[1] We are justified on the moment of our believing; but our sanctification is the business of a lifetime. For there is a life of faith as well as a birth of faith;[2] and it should be our care that ere this life is finished[3] its object should be fulfilled; which is, that we stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

Ver. 12. 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.' The imagery of this verse requires the same explanation as did that of the preceding. It is true that the proper night of the soul—the moral night—is anterior to conversion; and that when this event takes place, the soul passes out of darkness into marvellous light. And accordingly the true disciples of the Lord Jesus are said to be no longer the children of night, but the children of light and of the day. Still it is true that so long as we abide in this world, ours is but a state of comparative light—for here though we see it is but through a glass darkly; and that it is only in the next world where we shall live in the full light of the risen day, when we shall know even as we are known. The soul of a saint on earth, still in twilight obscurity, has not yet made its conclusive escape from the region of darkness; and not till ushered into heaven, or among the cloudless transparencies of the upper sanctuary, will it in God's light clearly see light. Such then are the night, and such the day spoken of in our text;

[1] Philip. ii, 12, 13. [2] Gal. ii, 20. [3] 2 Tim. iv, 7.

and it is because this night is far spent, and this day is at hand, that we are called on to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light.

There are works of darkness which shun the light of day, or would shrink from exposure, even in this world—such as the deeds either of shameful dishonesty or of shameful licentiousness. There are other works again, which, though alike condemned in the eye of Heaven, we should not here on earth call works of darkness, such as the overt acts which transgress no social law, yet bespeak a heart of deep irreligion, and utterly devoid of all sensibility to the sacredness or authority of God's spiritual law—as when His Sabbaths are secularised in convivial parties; or, in the intent prosecution, whether of the amusements or the business of life, decisive manifestation is given forth of a preference for the creature over the Creator, for the things and interests of time over the things and interests of eternity. These last, as being the mere fruits of nature's carnality, and springing universally forth of the habits and affections of natural men, we should not call works of darkness —for they are exhibited daily and without a blush in the face of society—not however because not utterly worthless in themselves, but because done before the eye of spectators, who have no perception of their deformity, done on the theatre of a world which has been rightly denominated the land of spiritual blindness and spiritual death. But if seen in the light of the divine law, and placed before the rebuke of the divine countenance, they will then be recognised as works of darkness, and

ranked as they ought with the worst atrocities of human wickedness. And accordingly on the great day of manifestation, and when the principles of a higher jurisprudence are brought to bear on the characters of men, many, the most esteemed and honourable among their fellows, will awaken to shame and everlasting contempt. Ungodliness will then appear in its true estimate, as the great master-sin—being indeed the seminal principle of all misrule and anarchy in creation; and therefore to be exiled and put forth into everlasting darkness, as a thing unfit to be seen on the open panorama of a harmonious and well-ordered universe.

Yet it might subserve a practical object, to view apart from each other those grosser offences which are usually stigmatised as works of darkness; and those more subtle delinquencies of the heart and spirit, which are universal as the species, and none therefore are at pains to conceal, because none are ashamed of them. It might help to distinguish between the incipient and advanced duties of the Christian life. At the very outset, nay anterior to their conversion, though with a view to it, nay in the aim of carrying it or bringing it to pass, we should call on all men to abandon their drunkennesses and dishonesties and impurities, or what themselves would all understand and admit to be works of darkness. This is a voice which should be distinctly and audibly given forth at the first call of the gospel, or first sound of the trumpet which it lifts in the hearing of all men. It is a work often done in fact at the bidding of natural conscience, or on the still lower impulses of prudence and cal-

culation—as when, to use a familiar phrase, the profligate, making a pause in his career, turns over a new leaf, or becomes, in the wordly sense of the term, a reformed man. Such a reformation is often achieved without Christianity; but on the other hand, there can be no Christianity without such a reformation. And it is a reformation which should be peremptorily demanded of all enquirers at their very entrance on the way of life—as being an indispensable part, or even preliminary, of that movement by which men pass out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. Else they are not framing their doings to turn unto God.[1] They are not turning unto Christ, if they are not turning from their iniquities.[2] It is thus that the moral character of gospel teaching should be vindicated and made palpable in the eyes of all men; and so as that they might recognise it to be something more than what they often apprehend it to be—the mere teaching of a cabalistic orthodoxy. Instead of which it is pre-eminently a practical system—striking at once at the evil habits, while its higher aim is to regenerate the evil hearts of men—So that in commanding them everywhere to repent and turn unto God, it charges them, at the first and earliest outset of their religious earnestness, to do works meet for repentance.[3]

But there are other and higher graces more distinctive of Christianity, and serving more specifically to signalise and separate the children of light from the children of this world; and which are altogether beyond the reach of unaided nature. There are certain things which nature, by the

[1] Hosea, v, 4. [2] Acts, iii, 26. [3] Acts, xxvi, 20.

sheer force of her own resolute and sustained purposes, might be able to cast off; but there are certain other things which nature in her own strength cannot possibly put on. She may of herself cast off many of the works of darkness; but of herself she cannot put on the graces and virtues which serve more specially to characterise and adorn the children of light. Thus to array herself, she needs other instruments than those which natively and originally belong to her—an instrumentality which is here significantly termed the armour of light, because, in the utter inadequacy of those implements or faculties which we ourselves possess, we require the use of other tools, other instruments of action than those, that we may have power to walk as children of light and of the day; or, which is tantamount to this, that we may have power to become the children of God.[1]

Still to cast off the works of darkness is to throw aside a great obstruction, which if suffered to remain, would prove a fatal impediment to the access of all spiritual and saving light into our minds. It may be nothing more than a mere shaking of the dead bones, ere the Spirit of life is blown into us—that mere awakening of the sinner, which is previous or preparatory to the act of Christ giving him light.[2] It is an essential step, however, in the process of our regeneration. There is a something to cast off, as well as to put on. The former we should give our immediate hand to. The latter we should give our immediate and earnest heed to. And it may perhaps help to elucidate the singular

[1] John, i, 12. [2] Ephesians, v, 11-14.

expression, 'armour of light'—if we attend to the manner in which, under the economy of the gospel, the power of a believer to serve the Lord Christ is made to stand allied with his perception of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is in the right views of his understanding in fact, that his great strength for obedience lies. And accordingly we read of his being sanctified by faith, of his being renewed in knowledge, of his receiving power to become a son of God on the moment of his believing in the name of Christ. But our best explanation perhaps of the armour of light, which in the verse before us we are called to put on—is to be had in Paul's description of the armour of God, which in his Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians we are also called to put on; and where we learn that the main furniture of a disciple, and by which he is equipped for the work and warfare of Christianity, lies in such acts and acquisitions as are altogether mental, nay chiefly intellectual—as having our loins girt about with truth, and our taking the shield of faith, and our putting on for a helmet the hope of salvation, and our having a constant respect unto the word, with prayer for the Spirit, that in the clear element of His manifestations we might be enabled rightly to discern and to make the right application of it—To which word therefore, we, in the language of Peter, should give earnest heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.

Before quitting this verse, it is well to remark, that as even the most advanced Christians are required to be constantly holding by and keeping in

exercise their first faith—so there is a call upon them too to be ever practising at their first obedience. For they too are still beset with their old temptations—insomuch, that if not vigilant and jealous of themselves, they may be precipitated back again into the most enormous and disgraceful works of darkness. The injunction therefore to cast off these is not yet superfluous, although Paul here addresses himself to men who had long embraced the truth and had long walked in it. There is room for the utmost strenuousness even to the end of our days—lest we should fall short of heaven; or, at all events, lest we should fall short of that rank in its blessedness and glory which we might have otherwise attained. Nay there is a most grievous misunderstanding of the gospel, if we be not as diligent and watchful and painstaking, as if overhung by the risk or the possibility of losing heaven altogether. There was nothing in the orthodoxy of Paul that relaxed his self-discipline, and this too under the apprehension lest he himself should turn out to be a castaway. With these views we can imagine nothing more urgent or impressive than the consideration in our text, that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. In particular, it should tell most emphatically on those who have now entered the vale of years, and may now regard themselves as walking on the shores or along the brink of eternity. And if the righteous scarcely be saved—where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?—an appalling thought truly, and most of all to such as him of whom Hosea speaks[1]

[1] Hosea, vii, 9, 10.

—"Yea grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not:" "And they do not return to the Lord nor seek him for all this." These premonitory symptoms of a dissolution, and so of a reckoning at hand, fail to alarm them; and so they go on in nature's torpid infatuation, when they should be lifting this fearful cry—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Ver. 13. 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.' The term honest is now of different meaning from what it was at the time that our translation was executed. It then signified that which is seemly, decent, reputable. It bore an especial regard to the aspect of our doings, and so we are called on to provide things honest in the *sight* of men. It is according to this, the proper and original sense of the word, that we are here bidden to walk honestly *as in the day*—that is, so as that our whole conduct shall bear exposure, and be sustained as respectable and right, though lying patent to the observation of all our fellows in society. There was a mighty stress laid by our apostle on appearance—on the creditable bearing of his disciples—on their character, not absolutely and in itself only, but on their character in the eyes of the world—Insomuch that, all sensitive and alive to the honour of his master's cause, he wept over those professors who gloried in their shame, and through whom the way of truth was evil spoken of. It was obviously not as an end but as a means, that he so valued the good report of his converts—even that their light might shine be-

fore men, and men might of consequence be won to the gospel by their conversation. Thus also Peter, in warning his converts against fleshly lusts, adds —"having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."[1]

It is with this view that he first warns them against those vices which most shun the light, and are peculiarly unfit for exhibition in the face of others—the vices of low and loathsome dissipation —drunkenness and impurity—of so offensive a description, that it was held a sore aggravation of their wickedness who practised them, if they counted it a pleasure to riot in the day-time. They are vices of inherent turpitude in themselves; but it evinces a higher degree of moral hardihood, when it was a turpitude in which men could glory—and highest of all, in an ostensible disciple of the Lord Jesus, who could thus bring disparagement and disgrace on that sacred cause which he was bound by every tie of gratitude and sincerity to adorn.

It is not, however, the object of Christianity to conceal vice, but to exterminate it—not to give its disciples but the face and appearance of virtue, but to give them virtue in substance and reality—and so as that they shall glorify the Lord with their soul and spirit, as well as with their bodies. And it is worthy of remark, that, for the achievement of this great moral change, it proceeds—not in the style of an ascetic—that is, not in the way of excision, but in the way of substitution—Or, in other

[1] 1 Peter, ii, 12.

words, when it calls for the sacrifice or the expulsion of one affection, it is by replacing it with another—and not by an act of simple dispossession, leaving the heart in a state of desolation and dreariness. Even the disposition to mirth it does not propose to extinguish, but rather provides with the outgoing of a kindred exercise—Is any merry let him sing psalms, making melody in his heart unto the Lord. We can fancy it to be another exemplification of the same design, another specimen of the same reigning character—that when it charges the disciples not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, it follows up the admonition, by telling them to be filled with the Spirit; and so to exchange the maddening influence of a mere animal excitement for another influence, glorious and elevating too, and fitted, though in a higher and holier way, to transport the soul above the cares of a present sordid and earthly existence. And as this holds true of the rioting and drunkenness, it holds alike true of the habits or practices which are specified immediately after—a thought suggested to us by the proximity of the advice given a few verses before, where the apostle subordinates all virtue to the law of love, and would supplant all vice by the same law. And certainly there is a high and holy and heavenly affection of love, which, if present and predominant within us, would most effectually overrule, if not eradicate those evil affections which war against the soul. The love of the Father is directly and specifically opposite, we are told by the apostle, to the lust of the flesh.[1] So that, if the love of God were but admitted into the bosom, and

[1] 1 John, ii, 15, 16.

had ascendancy there, it would not only cast out fear,[1] but would cast out, or at least keep down lust also. When called to abandon lust, it is by means of the sweetest and softest affection of which nature is susceptible—and that affection directed too to the best and the noblest of all objects. Did we love God with all our heart, there would be no room in it for those base and foul and unhallowed imaginations, which in the expressive language of the prophet, turn it into a cage of unclean birds. Under such a regimen, instead of being frightened from the indulgences of nature as by the scowl of an anchoret, we are gently yet irresistibly weaned from them as by the mild persuasions of a friend; and we feel it to be in beautiful accordance with this, that the apostolic dissuasives against licentiousness are so often couched in terms of so much endearment and tenderness. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 'Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you." "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory—Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth."

He concludes his enumeration of those works which are unfit for the light of day with strife and

[1] 1 John, iv, 18.

envying—which in another place he ranks among the works of the flesh.[1] They belong to the malignant, and not as the former to the licentious vices of our nature—but like these too are of such a character, as to shun the observation of general society. This holds especially true of envy, of which all men dislike the exhibition; and which therefore is left to eat inwardly on him who is actuated thereby, because ashamed of showing it. Even strife, when it breaks forth in outrageous expressions, soon becomes too much for the sympathy of our fellows; and so restrains at least its utterance, or its deeds of open retaliation, for the sake of decorum. There is a grossness in resentment, as well as a grossness in impurity—both of which require to have a veil thrown over them, even from this world's toleration; so that over and above the spiritual propriety of denouncing and denominating all sins as works of darkness, there is a natural or social propriety in affixing this denomination to the latter as well as the former of the sins enumerated in our text.

Ver. 14. 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' This figurative expression is more readily conceived by us as bearing application to the imputed righteousness of Christ, rather than to the graces of His example. That everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in, is viewed by us under the image of a garment, wherein we are invited to appear before God, clothed upon as it were, or invested with an order of merit, won not

[1] Galatians, v, 20, 21.

by ourselves but by the Captain of our salvation; and because of which God looks upon us, not in our own characters, but in the face of His anointed. There is undoubted truth in all this—yet it hinders not the application of the very same phrase, the putting on of Christ, to the adornment of our persons with those identical virtues which made Him to be chief among the sons of men, and altogether lovely. Such a representation, beside that it is correct doctrinally, harmonises with the Scriptural expression of it—as when called to put on the new man, to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. And thus too, "Be clothed with humility."

And we confess our exceeding value for that view, which puts our sanctification on the same footing with our justification, in that it subordinates both to our faith in Christ. We feel it to be a truth inestimably precious, that our personal holiness is a thing received by us, and from the hands or at the giving of another—just as our judicial acceptance is. It would mightily speed onwards our practical Christianity, did we habitually look unto Jesus as the Lord our strength, as well as the Lord our righteousness. The greatest lesson we have to learn in the school of preparation for heaven, is the efficacy of believing prayer for grace to help us in every time of need—that we might not only have His propitiation to shield us, but His power to rest upon us. Then should we know what it is to strive mightily according to the grace of God working in us mightily. The mystery would come to be resolved, because then experimentally

realised, of the utmost diligence in performance along with the utmost dependence in prayer—a happy and fruitful combination, mysterious to the general world, but not to the fellow-workers with God, because by them exemplified and carried into effect. The active and the passive of this conjunct operation work most prosperously into each other's hands; and the experience of the apostle, who when he was weak yet was he strong, reflects while it explains the beautiful saying of the prophet—that in quietness and in confidence ye shall have strength. A reposing confidence in Christ gives efficacy to prayer; and by the gratitude which it awakens, gives impulse to all the springs of obedience. Creature perfection, says old Riccalton, lies in the habit of bringing our own emptiness to the fulness that is in Christ Jesus.

'And make not provision for the flesh.' 'Provision.'[1] The word implies a forecasting of the mind; and the prohibition therefore is against all deliberation or devising of means or expedients for the gratification of our lusts. These base affections of our nature may be excited even involuntarily, on the sudden suggestion or unforeseen presentation of the objects which awaken them. Even then it is our duty to shun these objects, to turn our sight and our thoughts from vanity, and so to flee the lusts which war against the soul. But a far greater depravity than thus to feel them, is it to go forth upon them. One should be ever on the watch lest he is surprised into temptation; but it evinces a greater height and hardihood of profligacy to seek after it, and when, so far from a defensive vigilance against

[1] Προνοια.

the inroad of evil desires, there is an aggressive vigilance in quest of methods or opportunities for their indulgence. He is a confirmed and advanced learner in the school of wickedness, who can thus in his cooler moments bestow care and calculation on such an enterprise, and in short make a study of the likeliest methods for securing to himself the enjoyment of unhallowed pleasures; and this is the *pronoia*, the unholy *providence*, if it may be so termed, on which our text lays its interdict.

But it is not against all *pronoia*, all respect to things future, even though the futurities of this life, that the Bible warns us. Some might think so, because of such texts as "Take no thought for your life." "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat." "Take no thought for the morrow."[1] Take no thought, merimna.[2] Not pronoia, but *merimna*—which latter word does not properly mean thought, but anxious thought; and is accordingly better translated so in the following places. "But I would have you without *carefulness*"[3]—not without thought, but without carefulness. And the same word is also thus rendered in Philippians, iv, 6—"Be careful for nothing." We are not therefore to imagine, that because told not to be careful or not to be thoughtful for to-morrow, we must take no thought of to-morrow at all. True, it were highly criminal to make provision for to-morrow's lusts. But it is not unlawful on that account to make provision for to-morrow's necessities. Nay, there is another part of the Bible in which we are told that it were highly cri-

[1] Matt. vi, 25, 31, 34. [2] Μεριμνα. [3] 1 Cor. vii, 32.

minal not to make such provision. The pronoia of our text were criminal, but not the pronoia (the word there too) of the following verse—"But if any *provide* not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."[1] We should not have adverted thus minutely to the original Greek, or introduced it at all into a popular exposition of Scripture—had not our quotation from Matthew been one of those very few passages in holy writ, where the emendation of our present version is of any real popular or practical importance.

'To *fulfil* the lusts thereof.' Although there is no word for *fulfil* in the original, it being supplied by the translators—yet, as it is rightly supplied, we might here remark on the difference between the feeling of a lust and the fulfilment thereof. To feel a lust implies the presence of sin in us. To fulfil a lust implies the power of sin over us. The one is the sad evidence that sin still dwells in our mortal bodies. The other is the far sadder evidence that sin has still the dominion over them. When made, not of our own seeking but by surprise, to feel an evil desire, it is our part to flee from it. But greatly worse than to feel is to follow it; and worst of all is to provide for it.

[1] 1 Timothy, v, 8.

LECTURE. XCV.

ROMANS, xiv, 1—16.

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of."

THE church at Rome was made up partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles; and one great and obvious design of this epistle, as might be seen in various

passages from the beginning to the end of it, was to reconcile them so far as that they should be brought to one mind—if not in all matters of opinion, at least in mutual affection, which, when there happen to be diversities of sentiment or practice, cannot possibly be sustained without mutual forbearance. Their common faith, while implying a full agreement in certain great and essential principles, did not supersede the diversities here spoken off; and the object of Paul was not that in these they should cease to differ, but that in these they should agree to differ. He did not vainly attempt by a stern decree of uniformity to harmonise their understandings, so as that they should think alike; but he did attempt, by the mild persuasives of gospel charity, the far likelier fulfilment of harmonising their spirits, so as that they should feel alike in their love and benignant toleration of each other. Paul was pre-eminently and characteristically a peace-maker —up to the limit within which peace was at all practicable, or in as far as the high demands of principle and purity would allow—for beyond that limit none more unyielding, and none more uncompromising than he. It was only as far as lay in him, or as far as it was possible, that he lived peaceably himself, or would recommend others to live peaceably with all men. He was first pure; and it was after he had provided for this high interest—it was then that he was peaceable.

This beautiful combination, this blending together of truth and charity, is more fully and intimately seen by us, as we pass in detail over the successive verses of this truly catholic and enlightened chapter.

Ver. 1, 2. 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.' Who is meant by him that is weak in the faith we learn from the second verse, where we are told that the weak man was he who ate herbs—leaving us to infer, of course, that the strong man was he who believed that he might eat all things. He who was strong in the faith that Christ had fulfilled for him all righteousness, and left him nothing but the law of love, would in very proportion to the force of this conviction, feel exempted from the scrupulosities of a mere formal or external observation; and not only assert, without compunction or fear, but also live in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. It was easier, however, for the Gentile to do this than for the Jew, who had to overcome the prejudices of his early education, and make a conquest over his yet lingering sensibilities on the side of what he had been taught to look upon as right and religious in other days. For the genuine exhibition then of a strong and enlightened conscience, we should look not so much to the Gentile converts as to those Jewish disciples who did not judaise. And to them too should we look for greater tenderness towards those more sensitive of their brethren, who felt themselves not able to surmount the native partialities wherewith the recollections of their birth and of their hereditary worship had inspired them. They would all the more readily sympathise with feelings in which they themselves had shared—though with a struggle they had got the better of

them. They could make greater allowance for these their brethren in the flesh than could others; and this is not the only example of first-rate men, the highest in strength and intellect, being at the same time the most generous in their indulgence to the infirmities of others. Paul, himself a converted Jew, and who how regarded as superstitious that which he formerly held as most bindingly and inviolably sacred—he nobly interposes to throw the shield of his protection over those kinsmen and countrymen of his who had embraced the gospel, yet could not altogether and conclusively quit the dear associations which had begun with their infancy, and were strengthened along the successive stages of youth and manhood, till they had become babes in Christ, and continued babes or were still in the childhood of their Christianity, at the time when his epistle to the Romans was penned. We conceive that they would be chiefly the Gentiles who despised such. Paul, and those of the Jews who like him had had experience of the trial, would we imagine, with a fellow-feeling for the doubts and difficulties which themselves had mastered, view their weaker, but still their conscientious brethren, with respect and tenderness.

Accordingly in arbitrating between the weak and the strong, it is on the side of the weak that his first apostolic deliverance is given. He bids them be received, but not to doubtful disputations—to be recognised on the footing of their common brotherhood in all the great and essential principles of Christianity; but not to be harassed with contentious argumentation about those matters of indiffe-

rency, which, with their yet abiding prejudices, were not of indifferency to them. If they had not the understanding to be convinced of the nullity, because now the expiration, of the Mosaic ceremonial—or at least if they could not attain such a strength of conviction as to displace their feelings on the side of certain Hebrew observances to which they still so fondly and tenaciously clung, it was not the part of their brethren to overbear these feelings, or even to annoy them with vexatious controversies, at once endless and unfruitful. These are what the apostle in his other writings characterises as vain janglings, and foolish questions, and contentions, and strivings about the law, which were unprofitable and vain. What he inculcates, instead of these, is a discreet silence, and meanwhile a respectful toleration—in the confidence, we have no doubt, that, with mild and patient forbearance, all would come right at the last. He felt as if the important gospel truths which they laid hold of, would, by their own direct influence, dispossess the mind of all its Jewish absurdities and trifles. Seeing that at least the foundation on which they rested was sound, he trusted that the wood and hay and stubble would at length be consumed.[1] This is in perfect keeping with his treatment of the disciples in other instances. They agreed in all that was essential, else they could be no disciples of his; but they did not therefore agree in all things. He knew however that they were in the faith, and so under the teaching of the Spirit; and he trusted more to this than to the efficacy of

[1] 1 Corinthians, iii, 11-15.

any disputatious argument. And accordingly, instead of attempting to force them all prematurely into one way of thinking—he, on certain matters of inferior moment, left them very much to themselves, as he did those Philippians who were not yet perfect in all their views—Telling them, that "if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Meanwhile he was satisfied if, with all their differences and shortcomings in things of lesser consideration, his own paramount charity took but full possession of them. "Nevetheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." This was admirable and exquisitely good management—the same indeed with that of our Saviour, who refrained from putting new wine into old bottles; and, instead of dogmatising His apostles either into truths or observances which they were not yet prepared for, spake to them only as they were able to bear it. It was in this spirit that Paul treated his Jewish converts; and he wanted all who were alike enlightened with himself to treat them in the same way.

There are other general lessons enveloped in this passage; but, before expatiating any further on these, let me prosecute a little longer our examination of particular verses.

Ver. 3, 4. 'Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him

stand.' The apostle, in his even-handed manner, deals alike with both parties. After having told the strong that they should not despise the weak, he tells the weak that they should not condemn the strong. Let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth. In the state of his conscience, it were a profane thing in him to eat—for this would be to eat what he still thought was forbidden. But let him not judge others who do not think in the same way. Let him not look upon them as profane persons, though they should eat what he would religiously recoil from. God has received, or taken them into acceptance. It is likely that they had some palpable evidence of this acceptance in the visible and extraordinary gifts of that period—conferred on some of those, who, in the full use of their Christian liberty, looked on all meats as alike: And so they might make out the same conclusion for themselves that Peter did respecting the Gentiles of the household of Cornelius, after that they had received the Holy Ghost. Have a care then, lest, in refusing fellowship with these, you withstand or contravene the judgment of God. It is not improbable that these extraordinary gifts were shared alike by both parties—a lesson therefore to both of mutual respect and toleration. At all events, they had the express authority of the apostle, who, in the first verse, bade the strong receive the weak; and, in the third verse, tells the weak that God had received the strong. And it is thus that he would guard the one party against contempt of their fellows, and the other against censoriousness.

Ver. 5, 6. 'One man esteemeth one day above

another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. 'He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.' The same lesson is extended to days, respecting the observance of which there obtained a like diversity of sentiment. The apostle brings the same enlarged and enlightened casuistry to bear on both.[1] He wanted each man to act in conformity with his own persuasion, whatever that persuasion might be—only he wanted each man to be fully persuaded in his own mind. He did not care so much about what the persuasion specially was in such matters, as that the conduct should be agreeable thereto. He therefore forebare himself, and would have his disciples to forbear also, from all argumentation between the right and the wrong persuasion in these matters; but held it imperative that as the persuasion, which he wanted to be as thorough and decided as possible, so ought in all consistency the performance to be. The persuasion might be wrong, but this were only an obliquity of intellect. But if the performance were not as the persuasion, this were far more grievous—a moral obliquity—sin against the light of a man's

[1] For our views in greater fulness on the casuistry of meats and days, and certain other cognate questions—see seven Sermons, from the xii to the xviii, of the second volume of our 'Congregational Sermons,' being the ninth volume of the Series.

own conscience—the dereliction of what he thought to be his duty towards God. To think in one way of God's will and act in another, were to renounce the authority of His will—an abjuration of the principle of living unto God—Whereas men might think diversely of that will, and yet the will of God be alike respected; or the principle of living unto Him be alike retained and alike proceeded on by all. Paul generously grants the benefit of this fair and liberal allowance to both parties in this controversy, whether of meats or of days. The Lord may be alike the object of regard with him who observes the day and with him who observes it not —or with him who eateth and him who eateth not. In the hearts of both these His supremacy may be alike felt and recognised; and there may be a like devotedness to His service in the lives of both.

Ver. 7, 8. 'For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' Paul, as his manner is, stops at the passing suggestion which had occurred in the course of his argument—to render homage, by the way as it were, to the principle which it embodied. That principle is the entire surrender of the creature, in all his desires and doings, to the Creator who gave him birth. It is our part to make ourselves wholly over unto God. All true Christians, whether the observer or not of meats and days, are alike in this; and cannot possibly be otherwise without the forfeiture of their discipleship. Each real convert liveth unto God, and not unto

himself; and each man dieth unto God, and not unto himself. We think that there is a difference between these two clauses, which, however minute in expression, is worthy, in respect of substance and meaning, to have perhaps a greater stress laid upon it than is usually done. It is 'none of us,' who liveth to himself; but it is 'no man' who dieth to himself. None of *us*, none of the household of faith, no real Christian, but who liveth unto God and not unto himself—for at the commencement of his new life he made a voluntary dedication of himself unto God; and the constant, while throughout the voluntary habit of this life, is to yield himself up in all things unto the will of God and not unto his own will. Whereas universally no man dieth unto himself. When he dies it is not by a voluntary act of his own; but at the decree of God, to whose absolute disposal of him, whether at death or after it, he must helplessly and passively give himself over. When it comes to this, then is it true of every man without exception, that he can have no choice, but is wholly in the hands of God—if not a Christian, to be judged and consigned by Him as a vessel of wrath to the place of everlasting condemnation; and if a Christian, to be judged by Him, but that in order to his preferment as a vessel of mercy in the realms of everlasting blessedness and glory. It is only, however, the dying of the Christian that is of a piece with his living. If with him to live is Christ, with him also to die is gain, or Christ still, whom to win he counts all things but loss. It is he and he only who both lives unto the Lord and dies unto the

Lord—so that whether he live or die, he is the Lord's—it being his great aim, and that of all genuine disciples, so to labour, that, whether present or absent, whether living or dead, they may be accepted of Him.

Ver. 9. 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' One naturally enquires here how it is, that the death and resurrection of Christ stand connected with His right of dominion or lordship over both the dead and the living. That His death, in particular, gave Him a rightful sovereignty over the living, is otherwise expressed by the apostle in the following passage—"If one died for all, then were all dead; and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." It is indeed a most rightful thing, that as He poured out His soul unto the death for us, we should give up our souls in absolute and entire dedication to Him. By His death He purchased us, and made us His own. We are His property, as bought with the price of His blood;[1] and therefore it is our part to glorify the Lord with our soul and spirit and body, which are the Lord's. —And again, as to the effect of His resurrection, we are told that Christ is the first-fruits of them who slept—that because He liveth we shall live also—through death He destroyed him who had the power of death; and so, in virtue of the power wherewith He is now invested over heaven and earth, He can, in behalf of His captives in the

[1] 1 Peter, i, 19.

grave, open for them the door of their prison-house, and make them sit together with Himself in heavenly places, even around that throne of exaltation to which He has Himself been raised—and this "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In this and many other Scriptures, there is enough of harmony with the verse before us—to explain the dependence here stated between, on the one hand, the lordship of Christ over both dead and living, and His own death and own revival, upon the other.

Ver. 10–13. 'But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.' The consideration stated in these verses is so very obvious, and put so clearly and conclusively, that it requires no lengthened illustration on our part. It had indeed been already put—in the fourth verse—'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.' It really does not belong to us—it is not ours—thus to be judging and censuring one another. Speak not evil then one of another, and judge not

thy brother—for thou thyself art but a doer of the law, and not a judge. Your business with the law is to obey it, not to judge out of it. Who art thou then that judgest another?[1] The reason given by the apostle last quoted for not reckoning with, and not grudging against one another, is, that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and that the Judge is at the door.[2] The habit of sitting in judgment on each other, so prevalent not only in the world at large, but in the professingly religious world, is a peculiarly dangerous one—because it peculiarly exposes us, and that in the way of reaction or recompence, to the judgment of God. And accordingly we are told to judge not "that we be not judged;" and that with "what judgment we judge we shall be judged;"[3] and that if we will judge others, we must not think that ourselves shall "escape the judgment of God;"[4] and finally, that we should abstain from this practice, lest ourselves "be condemned."[5] But the consideration urged here is not properly the danger of it, but rather, if I may so speak, the impertinence or the presumption of it. It is intruding on the office of another—an office wherewith He and He alone has been invested; and which it is competent for Him only to discharge. In the language of the Psalmist—when we thus venture on a function so sacred and so lofty, we really are meddling with a matter too high for us.[6] It is really not for us, who ourselves are to be sisted at the bar of judgment, thus to usurp the place of its tribunal, and take the judgment upon

[1] James, iv, 11, 12. [2] James, v, 9. [3] Matt. vii, 2.
[4] Romans, ii, 3. [5] James, v, 9. [6] Ps. cxxxi, 1.

ourselves. This is the exclusive office of Him, before whom every knee is to bow and every tongue to confess; and our right place is that of them who do this homage, not of Him who receives it. This sort of judgment therefore, the judgment of others, is not within our province—although there be another judgment which Paul does allow us to exercise, and which indeed he himself exemplifies—the judgment not of another's character, but of our own duty—the duty, not of pronouncing on what others are, but of performing what we owe to them, and owe them too in this very matter. No doubt he tells us authoritatively what this duty is; but he leaves us at liberty to form our own judgment in regard to the real truth and principle of the question, and to act accordingly. We are free to judge, whether we should eat or not; but he lays it down as our clear and imperative obligation not to eat, if thereby we are to put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way. None more tolerant than Paul in things doubtful or insignificant—yet none more peremptory or uncompromising than he, when once the light of a clear and great principle breaks in upon him. Himself the strongest of the strong, he was yet the most indulgent of all men to the infirmities of the weak; nor can we imagine a more rare and beauteous combination than was realised by our apostle, who, without disturbance either to his enlightened conscience or manly understanding, could eat freely of all sorts of food—yet would eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest it should make his brother to offend.[1]

[1] 1 Corinthians, viii, 13.

Ver. 14–16. 'I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy him not with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of.' Paul here asserts his own right of judgment on the absolute merits of the question, and tells us the result of it—even the persuasion, nay more positive than this, the knowledge that no meat was unclean in itself. He further tells us, that he was so persuaded by the Lord Jesus—yet so unessential was this persuasion, so unimportant the point in question, that the same Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, did not interdict him from allowing to others the liberty of thinking differently. And accordingly at the very time of giving forth the sentence, and on the highest of all authority, that there is nothing unclean of itself, he yet leaves others at liberty to esteem any thing unclean. We are not sure, if anywhere else in Scripture, the divine authority of toleration is so clearly manifested; or so distinct a sanction given to a certain amount of liberty in opinion—even though it should be branded as latitudinarianism by those strainers at a rigid uniformity, who, as appears from this whole chapter, might carry their intolerance too far. Even at the expence of absolute, though not, it would appear, of indispensable truth, were men allowed to think of meats that they were unclean—and this in the face of the apostolic deliverance that they were not unclean. But while Paul suf-

fered them to think so, he made it imperative, that, if they thus thought, so also should they act. They were at liberty to think any particular meat unclean; but, so thinking, they were not at liberty to use it. This would have been to sin against the light of their own minds—to trample on the high prerogatives of conscience, which, even though mistaken, does not therefore forfeit the supreme authority which belongs to it.

'But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably'—or better and more impressive to the English reader—now walkest thou not in love. We are aware of nothing more attractive or amiable than the way in which Paul lets himself down to the weak; or than the flexibility of his accommodation to the harmless peculiarities even of the perverse and erring—all the more engaging in that when the slightest inroad was offered upon essential principle, none more resolute or inflexible in withstanding it than he. The explanation of these two different, though by no means opposite or inconsistent aspects, in the mind of our great apostle, seems to be this. He, on the one hand, a strong man himself, could be all respect and indulgence to the weak; and he pressed upon others strong as he was, the duty of being alike respectful and alike indulgent. But should these weak, on the other hand, not satisfied with this full allowance to themselves of their own peculiarities, impose these peculiarities on others as essential to salvation, and thus derogate from the sufficiency and the power of what Paul had all along and most zealously contended for as the alone

ground of our acceptance with God, even the righteousness of Christ made ours by faith—then what he most freely and generously conceded to the infirmities of others, he would not, even by the minutest fraction, yield to their intolerance. The one he could do, for this were but an exercise of pity. The other he could not do, for this were a surrender of principle. And thus it is that acts of seeming contrariety in the life and ministry of Paul admit of being fully harmonised. When he circumcised Timothy for example, and purified himself along with the four men who had a vow upon them for the accomplishment of certain rites prescribed by the law—these things he did under the influence of the first consideration, "because of the Jews which were in these quarters," as we read in one place; and in the spirit of charitable accommodation to "the many thousands of the Jews which believe," as we read in another. Paul was quite satisfied that on all such questions, the Gentiles should let alone the Jews; and that the Jews, on the other hand, should let alone the Gentiles. But when the Jews, not content with a toleration for themselves, turned upon the Gentiles, and would compel them "to live as do the Jews"[1]—then it was that the influence of the second consideration came into play. And so the same Paul who circumcised Timothy,[2] and purified himself according to the ritual of Moses,[3] and that because of true brethren, who advised this deference to the Jews that he might not grieve or disturb their consciences—would not suffer Titus to be circumcised,[4]

[1] Galatians, ii, 14. [2] Acts, xxi, 3.
[3] Acts, xxi, 26. [4] Galatians, ii, 3, 4.

and that because of false brethren, who would have made this deference to the Jews an occasion for bringing the Gentiles into bondage. To them he gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, and this for sake of "the truth of the gospel." Nay, when Peter gave way in so far to this scheme of compulsion, Paul withstood him to the face—and this again for "the truth of the gospel." A generous and voluntary compliance with Jewish scrupulosity is one thing; a forced compliance with Jewish intolerance is quite another. Paul would have yielded the former, because he felt for those which were of the circumcision, and is therefore to be applauded. Peter would have yielded the latter, because he "feared them which were of the circumcision," and is therefore "to be blamed." We can never sufficiently admire the honourable and consistent way which our great apostle found out for himself, when pressed with difficulties on the right hand and on the left. When holding question with those of his countrymen who were burdened with their own weak and wounded consciences, Paul knew how to be meek and harmless as a dove. When holding question with those of his countrymen, who, intent on judaising the whole Christian world, would have laid the burden of their ritual upon others, and thus infringed on the great doctrine of justification by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law—then Paul knew how both to be wise as a serpent, and bold as a lion. As the exhibition of a well-balanced mind, there are few things more admirable than this: Nor, after Him who is the great Pattern of all righteousness,

is there any scriptural character in which the best qualities of our nature are more gracefully and harmoniously blended; or where the noble conjunction of truth with mercy, of firmness with gentleness, is more conspicuously realised.

It is on the side of tenderness that he appears at present; and in behalf of a distress wherewith he of all others could most readily and delicately sympathise—the distress of an afflicted conscience. Let not thy brother be grieved with thy meat. The mere spectacle of what he deems to be a profane violation is fitted to give him pain. Or if brought into a state of ambiguity on this question of meats, between the influence of his own Jewish education, that would lead him to abstain, and the influence of Christian example, that would lead him to indulge —the very conflict is painful. But worse than painful, it might come to be destructive, should the authority of this example overbear him into a premature compliance against the light of his own conscience, not yet satisfied. In the one way you grieve, in the other you would destroy him—destroy him whom Christ died to save. Surely a little self-denial on our part is not too much to maintain the safety of the object for which Christ gave Himself up unto the death.

'Let not then your good be evil spoken of.' He is addressing himself to the strong; and the good he here means, their especial good, was the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. This liberty was liable to be perverted and abused in various ways. For example, they had to be warned not to use this "liberty for an occasion to the flesh."[1]

[1] Galatians, v, 13.

And it is added, "but by love serve one another." Now they were violating this love, if to please themselves they were either grieving or hurting the consciences of their brethren. And so there was a limit or a discretion to be observed in the exercise of this liberty—a liberty which ought never to be indulged, either for the gratification of their own licentiousness, or in opposition to that love which they owed to others.

And the reason given in our text supplies another limitation. They should not unnecessarily expose this good to be evil spoken of—even though the evil should be spoken of it falsely, or undeservedly. We learn from 1 Corinthians, x, 30—that the eating of certain things, such as what had been offered unto idols, was liable to be thus spoken of; and so along with the liberty of the gospel, the gospel itself was slandered, and Christianity made to suffer at the hands of its own friends. It should be felt enough surely, if this liberty minister peace to our own consciences; and it is a most unthankful return on our part, if we so parade it before the eye of others—as to excite prejudice and calumny thereby against the truth that is in Jesus. We might well surely deny ourselves somewhat for the good of the church and the advancement of godliness among men. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

LECTURE XCVI.

ROMANS, xiv. 17.

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

'Joy in the Holy Ghost.' In the high and hidden walk of a Christian's experience, there is much that looks very inaccessible to the eye of the general world. And it is evident, that just in proportion to their sense of its mystery and exceeding remoteness, will be their own hopelessness of ever realising it. They regard it as something of too recondite, too lofty a nature, for them to think of aspiring after. They have no fellowship with the joys or exercises of a believer, no common feeling, and even no common understanding with Christ's peculiar people, in ought that distinguishes this class of men from the rest of the species; and so they keep at a distance from these saintly and select few, just as they would from any outlandish society with whose tastes and gratifications they had no possible sympathy—either taking refuge in the thought, that it is all a fanatical imagination—or if it be indeed a reality, that it is a reality which lies at so wide a separation from themselves as to mock their every effort to lay hold of it.

It must be quite obvious, that in these circumstances it is most unwise needlessly to aggravate this impression which men have of the gospel, as of

a hopeless and impracticable mystery—for this will only widen their separation from it the more. It is not for the friends of Christianity to give it more of a transcendental air and character than what natively belongs to it—for this would be to check the approaches of the yet uninitiated, who might thus be deterred from the enterprise of ever scaling those heights which seem so awful, or of penetrating those obscurities which seem to cloud the summits, or to gather and to settle among the deep recesses of experimental religion. Whatever can be made plain and palpable to the world at large, should be made to stand out in full exhibition before them; and nothing that is unnecessary or uncalled for should be said, which can augment their conception, either of the gospel as a thing that lies beyond the range of all ordinary apprehension, or of its disciples as of those who are kept together by some secret tact that is incommunicable to all other men —the spell of a magic or a masonry, that can only be known or guessed at by themselves.

We are sensible, however, that with every effort at the explanation of Christian truth, there will remain on the minds of all who are not Christians an impression of its mystery. The distinction will still be kept up between the children of light and the children of this world; and the former will appear to the latter as if they spoke in an unknown language. There will be little community of thought or of feeling betwixt them; and however desirable to make the most of any right approximation that is at all possible, yet we are not to expect but that, in the whole cast and habitude of

their understandings, the two societies of the church and the world will ever be widely apart from each other.

These are the first reflections which our text has given rise to—for we are not aware of any that is more removed beyond the limits of all common and earthly experience. We even fear that among those who profess a stricter and more serious Christianity, this joy in the Holy Ghost is seldom realised; and that however much it may be in harmony with their doctrinal speculations, they have little or no experimental feeling of it. This is a topic on which, if they have any doctrine at all, it is at least a doctrine that has outstript their experience. They cannot speak of this joy as a thing that is personally and practically their own. They cannot specify an occasion of their history that has been at all brightened by it. They have no distinct imagination of what it is; and altogether it is even to them that matter of strangeness and of secrecy which they do not recollect ever to have shared in. They would like to know about it—for as yet, we doubt not, the conceptions of many even of these are vague and unsatisfactory; and, therefore, to help the understandings even of the zealous and declared orthodox upon this topic, as well as to reconcile to the uttermost those who look upon our faith as little better than that of mystics and visionaries, we should like that as much of elucidation as possible could be shed upon a theme that is either now-a-days very little thought of, or regarded in the light of a wild and fanciful illusion.

It may perhaps tend in a certain degree to dissi-

pate the mystery, if you advert to a distinction which I shall now propose to you. Joy in the Holy Ghost may be either a joy in His directly felt presence within you; or it may be a joy in the work which He has done within you. Now the first of these conceptions is far more mysterious than the second of them. We shall not now enquire, whether His presence, as a visitor or indweller, is ever felt directly—whether He is ever recognised to be in our hearts by any immediate feeling or immediate perception—whether, in short, the first conception is ever realised in the experience of any Christian below. Instead of knowing Him to be present in the way of contact or of His immediately felt and perceived residence within us, His presence in the soul of the believer may only be inferred, not from His contact with the human spirit, but from His work upon the human spirit. And so this joy in the Holy Ghost might mainly resolve itself into joy because of the truths which He has revealed to the eye of the understanding, and joy because of the virtues which He has impressed upon the character.

Let us take these two in order—dwelling very briefly on the first; and reserving our chief attention for the second of these particulars.

I. First then, there is a joy felt in the belief and contemplation of the truths impressed on our conviction by God's Holy Spirit. Thus far the joy is not some mistaken afflatus which you can give no account of. You can distinctly tell what it is. There is a palpable thing which the Spirit has enabled you to lay hold of. He has taken of the things of Christ and showed them unto you. More

particularly, He has shed a clearness on the efficacy of the atoning blood; and though He has let you know that you are a very great sinner, He has also let you know that Jesus Christ is a very great Saviour. That truth to which you were aforetime blind, He, by opening your eye, has made you to see; and it is such a truth as you cannot but rejoice in. He has caused you both to see a truth, and to hear a tenderness, in that gospel voice which issues from the mercy-seat; and as surely as when the hostility of the best and powerfullest of your earthly acquaintances is turned into friendship, you cannot but be glad—so surely will you feel a gladness, so soon as made to behold, that the God who challenges iniquity and cannot bear it in His presence, has become God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses. The man who is tost and distracted because of the dangers and the fears which encompass him, when freed from these and so translated into peace, vividly feels a joy along with it. Now this peace is of the Spirit's working, just because the truth from which the peace did emanate is of the Spirit's teaching. He teaches it through the word, by opening our eyes to the reality of Scripture. And so the joy which is felt because of the first ingredient of Heaven's kingdom that is specified in our text, even because of the peace into which the sinner has been translated—this joy may be regarded as entering into the third ingredient of that kingdom, even joy in the Holy Ghost.

II. But secondly. There is a joy in the Holy Ghost because of the virtues which He has impres-

sed upon the character. Here too there is something tangible, that furnishes, as it were, a material for our joy. The Holy Ghost works virtue in the character of him upon whom He operates; and joy in this virtue is joy in the Holy Ghost. Here is another abatement then, on the supposed mystery of this affection; and though we cannot go along with those who term themselves rational Christians, and would expunge all mystery from the doctrines of the gospel—yet we hold it most undesirable that any of its truths should be enveloped in greater mystery than properly belongs to them; and, on the other hand, most desirable, that all should be made as plain to the understanding, as the actual state of revelation, and the possibilities of human knowledge and comprehension will allow. We are aware of one expedient which we cannot go along with, and by which it has been attempted to make the whole of that theology which relates to the visitation and indwelling of the Holy Ghost more palatable to the intellect of the natural man. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of God; and whether that Spirit take up its residence within our hearts or not—whether or not it abides substantively there—whether it be in us as an essence, or only as a quality—still it is thought by many enough to warrant the gospel affirmation, that Christians have the Spirit of God if they have barely the characteristics of that Spirit fixed and delineated upon their own moral nature. And so in the estimation of many, to have the Spirit of God, is just to have a character kindred to that of God, just as in common language we may say of one man that he has in him

the soul of Newton, if he have the like taste and talent for philosophy—or that he has the spirit of some great statesman, if animated by the same patriotism—or of some great warrior, if actuated by the same thirst for the hazards and excitements of the contest—And so to have the Spirit of God, is regarded as tantamount, not to having that very Spirit within the receptacles of your bosom, but to your having a spirit there, which is like unto His —and thus to have the Holy Spirit only designs you to be a holy creature, or that you have within you the spirit of holiness.

Now certain it is, in the first instance, that this view of the matter tends to alleviate the mystery, and reduces the doctrine of God's Spirit being in man to a something, which those of merely secular or literary habits of conception can easily understand. If by having the Spirit of God within us, there is nothing more meant, than that our spirit is kindred to that of God—there is in this affirmation nought of that miraculous sort of aspect which provokes the incredulity of nature. It is simply assigning to our mind the character which it happens to possess; and it must moreover be admitted, that whether a similarity between our spirits and that of God be the whole doctrine or not—this similarity is allowed by all to be the undoubted effect of that inhabitation by the Holy Ghost of man as His dwelling-place, and man as His temple, which many, and we think soundly and scripturally, do contend for. The great object in fact of the Spirit's descent upon earth, and of His assuming as the place of His occupancy this one man and

that other, is to impress upon them the very image and character of God. He bloweth where He listeth, but the design of it is to inspire every one whom He so listeth with the very virtues of the Godhead—and so there is one view, according to which this joy in the Holy Ghost is really not at all unintelligible, nor ought it to stir up that incredulity which a feeling of the marvellous and the incomprehensible so often brings along with it. It is simply that direct joy which we have in the possession and the exercise of virtue. Joy in the Holy Ghost is the joy that naturally and constitutionally as it were, attaches to the spirit of holiness. If it be not pleasure in the immediate fellowship of God's Spirit—it is at least pleasure in its fruits, all of which are sweet unto the taste, and have in them what may be called a moral fragrance that ministers delight to the higher senses and faculties of our nature. There is an instant gratification to the heart in its own aspirations of love and purity and heaven-born sacredness; and if these indeed come from the Spirit, then it is a gratification in what He hath done and wrought upon us, and this is joy in the Holy Ghost. We may not be able to recognise His direct presence in our bosoms; but if we rejoice in the virtues which He hath implanted there, then it may truly be said that in Him we rejoice. And thus there may be many who have realised this affection, and yet perhaps have hitherto conceived that they were strangers to it; and just because they were looking for something else. They have perhaps been thinking all along, that joy in the Holy Ghost was a felt and conscious

delight, from fellowship with a visitor within, of whose personal agency and indwelling they had some mysterious access to know—otherwise than by the fruits of His operation, otherwise than by the graces and virtues which He imprest upon the character. Now should it so happen, that He is only known by His fruits—should the presence of God's Spirit in the soul, instead of being a matter of direct consciousness, be only a matter of inference from the graces and the virtues that be engraven upon the soul, then when rejoicing in them we may in fact be rejoicing in the Holy Ghost. There are some, we are persuaded, who have experienced this affection without knowing it. They have breathed a holy and a heavenly delight in prayer. They have felt a lofty and ethereal transport in the contemplations of sacredness. They have experienced how good a thing it is to draw near unto God, and in the beatitudes of intercourse with Him as their Friend and reconciled Father, they have often tasted upon earth of those very beatitudes which shall be perfected in heaven. They have had the dawn upon their spirits even here of that ecstacy which lies in an affection for the Godhead; and in the outflowings of a kindred love towards their brethren of the species, they have also felt that there is a native and most exhilarating joy. Now during the whole of this experience, they may not have adverted to the Spirit as at the time dwelling and operating within them; and in the very moment when they were rejoicing in His work, they may not have been at all sensible that they were rejoicing in Himself. Nevertheless it is even so.

There is a joy in the Holy Ghost which is not more inexplicable than the joy that every Christian feels in the play and exercise of his good affections —in the good-will that moves him kindly towards one—in the gratitude that draws him in loving regards and services to another—in the virtuous triumphs of temperance or purity, when the eye has closed itself against some ensnaring temptation, or when a victorious resistance has been made to it—in the fervour of those more saintly and celestial exercises, when the soul enters into communion with its God; and just as the eye delights itself with all that is graceful or engaging in the scenery of nature, so is the spiritual eye regaled when it expatiates over the graces of that moral imagery which stands revealed on the character of the Godhead. It is thus that there may be a joy in the Holy Ghost, even when He is not thought of in His personality, or in the power of His influences upon the human spirit. It is a very possible thing to be under an influence, and at the very time when the influence itself is not at all the object of contemplation. The mind may in truth be busied with other objects. It may be thinking only of God or of man or of duty; or of those precious truths on which hang the salvation of the sinner, and his obligation to a life of sacredness—and the only delight whereof it may be conscious, is the delight that it has in entertaining these, and in feeling virtuously of these. Yet still, it may be true that it is both the Holy Ghost who hath introduced him to a luminous view of the objects, and who hath awakened in him all the good and corresponding

emotions; and so, while to all sense he is occupied with virtue alone, and the joy that is felt by him is therefore a joy in virtue—yet nevertheless it is the Spirit that has originated and sustains the whole; and his joy in virtue is joy in the Holy Ghost.

According to this view of it then, joy in the Holy Ghost is joy in holiness; and it appears by our text to be one ingredient of the kingdom of heaven. By partaking of the Spirit of God, we are made to partake in the virtues of the Godhead; and the joy in question is a joy in these virtues. It is just such delight as the Eternal Himself has in the view and in the conscious possession of His own excellence—that primeval delight which cometh out of the inseparable union that obtained from everlasting between goodness and happiness—realised by the Mind of the Divinity, and reproduced in the minds on which He has stamped the likeness of His own character. There may be no way of recognising the power of an agent within your heart, but by the effects of his agency. There may be no way of ascertaining that the hand of a worker has been there, but by his handiwork; and all the pleasure which many a Christian feels in the Holy Ghost may be nothing more than the pleasure that is felt in those moralities of the heart, into which he has been renewed, and which are the traces of the Spirit's operation. If you want to ascertain whether ever you had the joy of our text, it is surely indispensable that you fix and determine what sort of thing it is. You may otherwise be led upon a wrong track of enquiry; and droop into despond-

ency because you have not met with an evidence that is no where to be found. In regard to the Spirit of God, you neither hear His voice, nor do you see His shape; and you cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. But you may know Him by His fruits; and if these fruits do indeed regale your moral appetite for goodness and righteousness and truth—if obedience be the fruit; and you feel that in this obedience, as in the keeping of the commandments, there is a great reward—if gladness have sprung up in your heart along with the graces of the new creature—if you have ever tasted that to be in a holy is to be in a happy frame; and that to breathe in a religious atmosphere is of itself to breathe in an atmosphere of purest delight—This perhaps is all the evidence that you have a warrant to look for; and instead of expecting a joy in the Holy Ghost analogous to that which one has in personal intercourse with a friend —instead of beholding any direct manifestation of His presence within you, you may never on this side of death be admitted to see more than the marks of His performance upon you—And we repeat, that if you have ever felt a joy in the meekness and the godliness and the love and the temperance and the purity which it is His office to impress upon the soul, this may be joy in the Holy Ghost—this may be the very joy that you are in quest of.

And by urging this upon you, I have another object in view than to guide you aright in the pursuit of evidence. I should like to take an opportunity now of expounding to you the real essence of heaven's blessedness. This joy in the Holy Ghost

is an ingredient of the kingdom of heaven; and you cannot be too pointedly or repeatedly told—that what constitutes your happiness there, is that which has constituted the happiness of the Godhead from all eternity. I want you to separate in thought the main and characteristic enjoyments of paradise from all those secondary or subordinate enjoyments wherewith we fancy it to be peopled; and again to assure you that the ecstacy of these ethereal abodes lies not in heaven's music, or heaven's splendour, or any adaptation between the materialism of heaven and the glorified senses of those who are admitted to its transports and its triumphs. The joy in the Holy Ghost which will be enhanced and perfected there, and of which we have a foretaste here, is the joy which God Himself has in holiness. He delights in His own Spirit, in its graces, in its attributes, in all the beauteous and venerable characteristics which belong to it; and by imparting to us of this Spirit, He gives us the very materials of that delight which constitutes His own essential and unchangeable happiness. In other words, the joy of heaven is mainly and substantially speaking, a moral, a spiritual joy; and if the greatest happiness lie in the enjoyment of what we most love, then the best definition that can be given of the happiness of immortality, is that it consists in the enjoyment of righteousness by those whose nature it is supremely to love righteousness. To them the most delicious harmony by far is that moral harmony which they feel to be within their own heart, where righteousness hath taken up its secure and everlasting possession;

and to them the most glorious of all splendour is that splendid righteousness wherewith, among the angels and saints and hosts both of the redeemed and the unfallen, they are everywhere encompassed. But chiefly will they have joy in the city of the living God, because God Himself is there; and the light of His manifested countenance will be the light thereof. It is because of the worth and the goodness and the moral grace and grandeur that radiate directly upon their view from the aspect of the Divinity—it is because of the high and the holy perfections of virtue which sit enthroned in the place where His honour dwelleth—it is because of the sympathy which through the Spirit given to us is felt in our own bosom with the virtues of the Godhead, and the love wherewith He rejoices over those creatures on whom He hath imprest the lineaments of His own holy nature, reflected back again by them on that primary excellence from which all their holiness is derived—It is because of these moral elements that the joy of paradise is full. All there have a godlike virtue, and therefore it is that their happiness is godlike.

And it would at once purify your thoughts of heaven, and deliver the work of your preparation for it from all taint of legalism, could you but clearly understand that the great object of the economy under which you sit is to make you like both in character and in enjoyment to God. Just think what it is that forms His motive to righteousness. Just make out a distinct reply to the one question —whether is God righteous because of a law of righteousness that is over Him, or because of the

love to righteousness that is in Him? He it is obvious, is under no law, and is responsible to no jurisdiction. Any act of virtue in Him is not an act of deference to any authority—nor is it in submission to the control or the cognisance of any superior. When He does what is right, it is not because He is so bidden, but because to His taste there is a beauty and a beatitude in rightness. The virtue that is observed as a thing of commandment, is of a character wholly dissimilar and distinct from the virtue that is indulged in as a thing of native and spontaneous delight. Now God is not the subject of a commandment. All that He does is not of constraint from without, but of choice from within; and when righteousness, from a matter of constraint becomes a matter of choice, it instantly changes its whole nature, and rises to a higher moral rank than before. It is impossible that God can be at all moved by the authority of a law, or that the fear of its reckoning or its vengeance can have any weight upon Him. And so we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are dead unto the law—that is, dead to a sense of its threatenings—dead to all feeling of compulsion—delivered from every impression of a superior standing over us, and overbearing our own pleasure by His resistless prerogative and power. But the same God whom it is impossible to move by law's authority, moves of His own proper and original inclination in the very path of the law's righteousness. And so again, we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are alive to the virtues of that same law, to the terror of whose severities we are altoge-

ther dead. We are no longer under a schoolmaster. Our obedience is changed from a thing of force into a thing of freeness. It is moulded to a higher state and character than before. We are not driven to it by the rod of authority. We are drawn to it by the regards of a now willing heart to all moral and all spiritual excellence. It is upon a well of living water being struck out in the heart of renovated man—it is upon the entrance there by the Holy Ghost given unto all who receive the Saviour—it is upon His operation by which we are made to delight in the very moralities, and so to taste the very joys of the Godhead—it is upon that transformation by which the spirit of bondage is cast out, and succeeded by the spirit of adoption and of glorious liberty—It is thus that the joy of my text arises in the disciple's bosom; and while even here it forms an ingredient of heaven's kingdom, it is also the best presage of that eternal heaven which is awaiting him.

Such views, if more cherished and more proceeded on, would do away every imagination of an antinomianism in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The end of that gospel is not to set aside human virtue, but altogether to purify and to raise it. It is to set aside an old economy, by which virtue was prescribed; but under which it became an ignoble thing, and gathered upon its whole aspect a taint of mercenary sordidness. And it is to substitute a new economy in its place, under which virtue, so far from being expunged, is animated by the very spirit and brightened into those very hues of loveliness wherewith it is irradiated in the sanctuary of the Eternal. It is

to exalt the selfish and low-born morality of earth into the sacredness of heaven; and not to extort the offerings of reluctance and fear, but to inspire at the very time that it bids the services of an affectionate and willing obedience. I do not ask, if you ever rejoiced in the Spirit of God felt as if personally alive and present in your bosom. This is a test of your discipleship, to which I fear that few if any of this, and very few of any congregation whatever, could respond. But I ask, if you ever rejoiced in the law of God, felt to be that pure and righteous and elevated thing which the Psalmist professed to be his delight and meditation all the day. This is a test that I do insist upon; and if not a joy in the direct feeling of the Spirit's presence, it is at least a joy in the fruit of the Spirit's power. It is all the length to which I feel warranted to carry my explanation; and a length to which, if there be any here present who has practically come, we can at least promise to him the blessedness of the man who delighteth greatly in the commandments.

In our first head, we spake of the joy that is felt on our believing the truths of the gospel, and more especially the truth of God's reconciliation to us in Christ Jesus. We are glad because of peace betwixt us and God; and peace is one ingredient of heaven's kingdom mentioned in our text. In our second head of discourse, we spoke of the joy that is felt on our acquiring the virtues of the gospel. There is an immediate delight in righteousness or virtue, that accrues by a law of moral nature to the possessor of it; and righteousness is another in-

gredient of heaven's kingdom mentioned in our text. Joy in the Holy Ghost, which is the third ingredient, may be regarded by some as joy in the two former; and called joy in the Holy Ghost, simply because peace and righteousness are the work of the Holy Ghost. But, additionally to the joy which the mind has in these effects of the Spirit's operation, there must, after experience of these effects, be a distinct joy, when the mind takes cognisance of them in connection with their cause—when the Christian can trace the virtues which he has been enabled to exercise, to the source from whence they emanate—when he finds, that in proportion to the fervency and faith of his prayers for the Spirit of all grace, he is actually made rich in the graces and accomplishments of the new creature. There is a joy in the very investiture of these moralities; but a further and a distinct joy in the consideration of who it is that has put them on. When the Christian reflects on himself as a temple of the Holy Ghost—when he thinks of being so signalised —when enabled thus to judge, that God walks in him and dwells in him; and upon this evidence that He has put a law into his heart making him to love it, and written it in his mind making him to understand it—There is elevation in the very thought; and though it may not be joy in the directly felt presence, yet it may be joy in the inferred presence of the Holy Ghost. To arrive at this, my brethren, you have to entertain the truths of the gospel, even until you come clearly to see and firmly to have faith in them. You have to cultivate the virtues of the gospel, even until they become the main de-

light and exercise of your lives. You have to pray that the eye might be made clearly to apprehend the one; and the heart to be more and more smitten with a love for the other, and a sense of their supreme obligation. You are to persevere in asking even till you receive, and in seeking even till you find, and in knocking even till it be opened to you; and, however remote and recondite the acquirement may appear to you now—yet, if you will just set out in good earnest from the humble elements of Christian scholarship and go on unto perfection, you will, from a joy in the truth and a joy in the virtues of the gospel, arrive at a distinct joy in the fellowship of Him who hath manifested these truths, and moulded you to these virtues. You will pass on to the higher stages of the Christian experience, and be at length emboldened to say that the Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirits, that we are indeed His children; and hereby know we that we are in Him, even by the Spirit which He hath given to us.

LECTURE XCVII.

ROMANS, xiv, 17—23.

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

We recur to the 17th verse in this lecture, simply because of the immediate reference made to it in the verse which follows—'He that in *these things* serveth Christ'—serveth Him in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost—These things are both acceptable to God and approved of men. The circumstance of their being approved of men, as well as acceptable to God, plainly enough intimates that the social is blended with the sacred in the services here specified. The righteousness of our text includes more than the righteousness which is made ours by the faith that is well-pleasing to God, but also the righteousness that is good and profitable to men. The peace comprehends in it more than that peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts

and minds in Christ Jesus; but also the pacific virtues of the blameless and unoffending citizen, who does all that in him lies to maintain concord and good-will in his neighbourhood. Even the joy, though primarily it be that joy in the Lord which is the strength and aliment of the spiritual life—yet as being the opposite of moroseness, or of sullen and infectious gloom, is fitted to have a gladdening influence over the daily companionships of that believer who serves his God, not in the spirit of fear, but in the spirit of love and peace and a sound mind. In all these ways may the virtues of the 17th verse realise the two-fold property ascribed to them in the 18th. They may at once be acceptable to God and approved of men.[1]

Ver. 19. 'Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.' In this pacific spirit, the spirit of conciliation and charity, let us follow after the things which make for peace—not after the vain questions which minister strife rather than godly edifying, but after the great and undoubted objects on which all the real disciples of Jesus are sure to coalesce, and to strive for with one mind and one soul. The things on which they agree are not only far more numerous, but of greatly surpassing importance over the things which differ—provoking each other to love and to good works—exhorting one another daily, while it is called to-day—assembling together in meetings of fellowship and prayer, for

[1] For a larger exposition of this verse, see the second sermon in our volume of 'Commercial Discourses'—being the sixth volume of the Series.

their mutual confirmation both in the faith and holiness of the gospel—uniting in their schemes of Christian philanthropy, the combined prosecution of which in our day has led to many a delightful re-union of spirit among professing Christians; and given rise to so many periodic festivals of a common cause and common charity, in which all might rejoice—These be the things that make for peace; and, within the limits of essential principle, will cause all sectarian diversities to be forgotten.

'And things wherewith one may edify another.' Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.[1] Let us live not peaceably only, but profitably with each other. He had before told his converts—as far as possible, and as much as lay in them, to live peaceably with all men. He was obliged to lay these qualifications on the advice he gave them—for purity is a higher object than peace; and as it is our first duty to profit men, rather than please them, it might often be impracticable to labour for the convenience of saints, without stirring up the enmity of unconverted nature. But whatever danger there may be, of exciting the displeasure of the unregenerate in our attempts to convert, there is far less danger of incurring the wrath or hostility of disciples in our attempts to edify—only provided however, that we keep by the things which make for edification. We cannot answer for that unanimity which is so desirable, if Christians will be so pragmatical and injudicious, as to be urging their own small and senseless peculiarities on the acceptance of others. Would they only keep by what is great and essential, seldom or never would

[1] 1 Corinthians, xiv, 12.

any real Christians at least fall out by the way. They are the vain janglings about words of no profit, which minister to wrath rather than to godly edifying; and often the very reason why the things which men follow after make not for peace, is because they make not for edification. Surely there is good and worthy cause here, why a disproportionate stress should not be laid upon trifles. A most important, nay a vital interest may hinge upon it. Our Saviour's prayer[1] would intimate that the progress of Christianity in the world, its further and larger acceptance among men, depends most materially on the ostensible unity of those who are already Christians. They are the divisions of the religious world which have proved so fatal to the growth of religion in society. Zeal is a good thing, but only when expended on a good and adequate subject. It is not to be told what mischief has been done by needless controversies—both within the church, among Christians themselves; and without, in restraining the operation of that good leaven which might otherwise have leavened all the families of the earth. Christ's prayer on earth for His disciples was, "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Ver. 20. 'For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.' Do not for the sake of meat destroy the work of God—a reiteration of what he had said before in ver. 15—'Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.'

[1] John, xvii.

For if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy. It is true that that which entereth into a man defileth not a man; and as far as the effects of the mere material entry of any sort of food into the stomach are concerned "all things are pure." God hath now abolished the distinction between clean and unclean meats; and what He hath cleansed, that call not thou common or impure. The evil thing lies not in the eating, but in the eating with offence. It is the offence, and that alone, which constitutes the evil. There is no evil that results from eating, if no spiritual injury is sustained by it. But there does accrue a very great spiritual injury, if not to yourself, at least to your brother—if you so eat as to make him fall.

Ver. 21. 'It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.' In opposition to what he denounces as evil in the preceding verse, he tells us what is good in the present one —a good which he nobly exemplified himself, when he said that he would not eat flesh while the world standeth, lest it should make his brother to offend. He would not grieve him by stirring up weak and anxious scrupulosities in his mind. And, what is worse than merely grieving, he would not seduce him into an act of positive transgression, by causing him to outrun the light of his own conscience —which he would do, if, through the power of imitation, he tempted him to eat that which he saw himself eat, before that he was fully convinced of its lawfulness. The good or the evil all hinged, not on the thing in itself, but on the effect it was

calculated to have, or actually had, on the practice of others—which practice was in them sinful, if it traversed their own principles. It is thus that our eating might prove the putting of a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in a brother's way.

Ver. 22. 'Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.' It is obvious that Paul had a greater respect for him whose conscience was free of these difficulties, and of the consequent distress that ensued from them. The man who felt himself at liberty, had on these questions at least the spirit of power and of a sound mind,[1] which in one of his addresses to Timothy he opposes to the spirit of fear. But to complete the description of that which he commends, we must add the spirit of love also; and this would lead us to look not only at our own things, but at the things of others. It is very well for himself that his conscience does not trouble him—so that whether he eateth or eateth not, his own peace with God might remain unbroken. It is a happy thing for him that he condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. This is so far good; and were self one's only concern, there might in this matter be the indulgence of an unbounded liberty. But there are other interests at stake; and he is bound by the obligation of God's second great law to look at these. More especially is he bound not to give offence, in a thing not of obligation but of indifferency, so as to pain his brother's feelings, or gall him in a matter on which he is sore or weak; and still more not to place a stumblingblock before him,

[1] 2 Timothy, i, 7.

over which he might fall by running against the light of his own convictions—for though the strong man may eat, because, believing it to be lawful, with him to eat is a matter of indifferency—the weak man may not eat, because if he do, believing it to be unlawful, then it would prove that with him to sin were a matter of indifferency—'Hast thou faith?' is a question which does not refer to the faith that is unto salvation—but to clearness in the matter on hand—Art thou clear and confident as to the lawfulness of eating what by the law of Moses was forbidden? They who are not clear, but stand in doubt, have not faith in this matter, though they may have the faith which is unto salvation. He who has the faith, who is fully persuaded in his own mind that to eat is allowable—let him have it to himself before God. There is no call upon him to parade it before others—so as either to hurt their religious sensibilities, or to harass them with doubtful disputations.

Ver. 23. 'And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' For 'he that doubteth,' the translation would be as correct in itself and more accordant with the apostle's reasoning, if we read 'he that discerneth and putteth a difference between meats.' It is so given in the margin of some of our Bibles. The judaising Christian did something more than doubt the lawfulness of eating what was forbidden by the Mosaic law. He had the positive conviction of its unlawfulness. For him then to eat would be to sin, not in the face of a doubt, but, worse than this, in the face of an

absolute and affirmative conviction. It is proper, however, to observe, that even to do that of which one doubts, or is not sure, whether it be lawful or no, has in it a certain, though it may be a less degree of moral hardihood. It is to incur the hazard, if not the certainty, of falling into a transgression; and to brave such a risk, argues a weak feeling of religious obligation.

At the same time, it is further proper to remark —that whereas the word damnation, in the common acceptation, means the future and everlasting punishment of the wicked—the proper and original meaning of its condemnation—marking therefore the blameworthiness of the act to which it is applied—but not implying necessarily the final and irreversible ruin of him who has committed it. The same observation holds true of 1 Cor. xi, 29—"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) unto himself." This mitigation of the sense will not make any real Christian less careful of offending.

'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' This here is not the universal proposition which some would make of it. It does not mean that every action of an unbeliever is sinful, because he wants that justifying faith, without which there can be no acceptance either for his person or his services. This may be true, but it is not the truth contained in this passage. As we said before, the faith here spoken of is a faith limited to a particular point. The man has not the belief that to eat certain kinds of food is lawful; and if he eat of them notwithstanding, to him it is unlawful.

We are not to imagine of this chapter, that the subject of it has now gone by. There are principles here of universal and abiding application—lessons of standing authority, the obligation and importance of which remain to this day; and though the casuistry of Jewish meats may seldom or never be in practical demand amongst us—yet is there a certain other casuistry, which gives rise, as before, to the distinction between weak and strong; and which still continues to exercise, and sometimes to perplex the consciences of enquirers.

In separating, as our great apostle did with inimitable skill, the clear from the doubtful—there is one obvious consideration which ought never to be forgotten. Each man is still his brother's keeper. We are all responsible to a certain extent for the Christianity of other men; and though there be many indulgencies, which, viewed singly and in themselves, the light and liberty of the gospel would allow—yet are we bound to abstain from them, if our example otherwise, would inflict a moral injury upon any of our fellows. Let me notice, as a case in point, the literalities of Sabbath observation. There are certain imaginable freedoms on that day —an evening walk—an act of convivial intercourse with a pious relative or friend—a journey, a visit, or written message in reply to some call of greater or less urgency, but the necessity of which, or the mercy of which, admits of being interpreted variously. Many will be found to contend for the innocence of these; and perhaps some undoubted Christians there are, who might occasionally give in to them, without violence to their own con-

sciences, or even any damage done to their own spirituality. But there might be others looking on of a different habit and education, who could not share in these liberties, without a shock on their religious feelings; or it may be such a stress on the inner man, as might seriously derange and put out of joint the whole structure or system of their religious character. They may have been precipitated into an imitation which yet sat heavy on their consciences—condemning themselves in that to which the example of another may have emboldened them; and in which circumstances, therefore, more especially if the danger of an issue so lamentable was known, the example ought not to have been given. It is thus, we apprehend, that an English Christian would acquit himself during his temporary residence in one of the retired parishes of Scotland. He would conform to our standard of Sabbath observation; and in the exercise of a right delicacy and discretion, would refrain here from liberties which might be comparatively harmless in or around his own dwelling-place. He would not, for instance, if made aware, scandalise the domestics of any of our families, by superadding the instrumental music of the drawing-room to the worship of Sabbath even—though, possibly with him a usual accompaniment, it might minister to the devotion of his own feelings, and so add to the perfection of the service. Would that this principle had been more respected ere the fearful experiment now in progress of railway desecration had been so recklessly gone into; and which, if persevered in, threatens to speed beyond all calculation the religious degeneracy of our beloved land.

As a further exemplification of the principles unfolded in this chapter, we might instance those numerous questions, of shade and degree, which have been raised about conformity to the world; or, more explicitly, about the share which might be lawfully taken in this world's companies or this world's amusements. Amid the difficulties, perhaps the impossibility, of advancing any strict and literal solution which shall be applicable to all cases, there is one thing unquestionable—and that is the concern which all ought to feel for the moral safety of others beside themselves. Grant of the strong Christian that he may pass unscathed through the festive parties of the ungodly, and perhaps even leave the savour of what is good in the midst of them; or grant that without injury to his own spirit, he may lend his occasional presence to certain of the haunts of public or fashionable entertainment—it must not be forgotten that many are the weak Christians, who, if led to the premature imitation of his example, would inevitably perish among the surrounding contaminations of an atmosphere which they could not breathe in and yet live. There can be no mistaking here the application of Paul's heroic and truly high-minded example. He would not eat flesh while the world standeth, should it make his brother to offend; and neither ought we to enter the ball-room or theatre while the world standeth, if it make even the very weakest of our brethren to offend. It were making an unlawful use of our Christian liberty to do even that which is lawful—should it precipitate others to do the same things, if either with a deleterious

effect upon their characters, or if beyond the concurrence and bidding of their own consciences.

And if in things doubtful or indifferent, it be the duty of any Christian to deny himself for the sake of others, how much more imperative is the obligation under which he lies to refrain from the example of all that is clearly and undoubtedly wrong. It is not to be told what enormous mischief has been done by the infirmities, and still more by the sins of those who have attained a name and eminent reputation in the Christian world—and this in the way of tempting others to relax the strictness of their lives, because concluding that they too are surely within the limits of safety, though with the same amount of carelessness and sinfulness which they see to be in those whom all have agreed to acknowledge and admire. The pernicious consequences of even an occasional slip, and still more of a sinful habit, in professors of high standing, are truly deplorable; and such as to lay them under a deep responsibility for the souls of others as well as their own souls. Their fall might involve the fall of many. Because of their misconduct the spirituality of many might wax cold. Their mere follies or faults of temper might serve to lower the standard of practical Christianity in their neighbourhood. Even their wrongness and waywardness in little things may cast a soil on the profession of the gospel; and when, instead of a small, a great moral injury is done—how dreadful the penalty. For woe to the world because of offences. It were better for a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea—than that he should offend one of Christ's little ones.

There is another, and we think a most legitimate inference, to be drawn from this passage. It is that Christians should either cease to differ—or, if this be impossible, that then they should agree to differ. We of course exclude such differences, as, relating to what is vital and essential, imply that either one or other of the parties is not Christian—disowning, as they do, some weightier matters, whether of doctrine or of the law. There is a territory within which controversy is not only permitted but enjoined; and so we are bidden to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. And there is another territory within which controversy has had the interdict, and that of sacred and scriptural authority, laid upon it; and so we are told to avoid foolish and hurtful questions, and to indulge not in vain janglings, and to refrain from doubtful disputations: And we hold it a mighty reinforcement of this lesson by the apostle, that our Saviour should have rebuked His disciples, because they forbade the man who worked miracles yet followed not after themselves—saying, Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us. It may be difficult to assign in theory the limit between these two territories —yet, with a stronger and more general charity in the religious world, we feel persuaded that it were not so difficult to conform to it in practice. The treatise which should undertake to define and set forth the line of demarcation, might very possibly give new impetus to the whirlpool of debate—being itself the brooding or fermenting cause of new controversies. This is a very likely result, whenever the subject is introduced or started anew on the

field of argument. Yet we despair not that on the field of action, or in the real and actual administration of the church's affairs—many of the stoutest and fiercest differences both of the present and former ages will at length fall into desuetude—so that all Christians might be at length brought to be of one mind; or, if not, that it shall at least be patent to the eyes of the world, that they are all of one spirit. We are aware of liberalism, that it is a term recently devised to express a spurious liberality, or this virtue carried to a hurtful and unprincipled excess. And we are also aware that latitudinarianism is generally employed in a stigmatical or bad meaning—else we might have said that there is a wholesome latitudinarianism. For example, we cannot imagine how one should read in moral fairness the Epistle to the Romans, or still more perhaps the Epistle to the Galatians—and yet, if he defer to these scriptures at all, should reject the doctrine of justification by faith alone—So that to recognise as Christians those who deny this article, we should hold to be liberalism. Again, there are other differences, on either side of which has the Bible left any such express or authoritative deliverance, as would lead us to pronounce of one or other of the parties, not only that they are in the wrong, but fatally in the wrong. We should rank among these differences many questions of meats and days and priestly vestments, and many points both of church order and church government—So that to recognise as Christians those of the Episcopalian or Independent or Methodist or Baptist persusasions, we should hold not to be liberalism, but right

and genuine liberality. Paul exemplified both these methods of dealing with controversies and disposing of them—Bold and resolute and uncompromising in all that was essential—Yielding and generous in all that was not so; and, however strong and free from all scrupulosity himself, yet deferring with the utmost tenderness to the honest and conscientious scruples of other men. He thus acquitted himself of two most important services—the one as an intrepid soldier, the manly defender and guardian of the church's purity; the other as a discreet and wary counsellor, who knew both how to judge charitably, and to arbitrate wisely, for the church's unity and peace.

And unless we follow this high example, we do not see, how the blissful consummation of that unanimity in the Christian world, of which our Saviour speaks as the stepping-stone to a universal Christianity through the world at large,[1] is ever to be arrived at. Surely for the fulfilment of this sacred object, it were well that in the confessions of different churches, articles of faith, viewed as articles of distinction or separation, should not be unnecessarily multiplied; and we would further submit, whether it is not a most unwarrantable hazarding of this high and precious interest, to speak of the exclusively divine right of any form whatever of ecclesiastical government. It is thus that certain strenuous advocates both of Presbytery on the one hand, and of Episcopacy on the other, have been heard to affirm, that they will never consent to the loosening or letting down of a single pin in the tabernacle. This tenacity of theirs we should all

[1] John, xvii, 21, 23.

the more readily understand—if the specific information of each and every pin were really to be had in Scripture. But in the absence of this, we do think that there might be a great deal more of mutual toleration. It has been well said, that, while it is our duty to be wise up to that which is written, we should not attempt to be wise above or beyond it; and so too, while it is our duty to be inflexible up to that which is written, it is surely not our part to be inflexible beyond it. We feel confident, that with the use and right application of this principle, there is immense room for the abridgment of the church's controversies. Let us hope that the movement is upon the whole in this direction; and that, even amid the fits and fermentations of this busy period, the Christian world is now heaving towards this better state of things—when the war of opinions shall cease; and both truth and charity shall walk hand in hand. Heaven grant, that this perspective of brighter and happier days may be speedily realised.

And let us not be afraid lest, when controversies shall cease, men will therefore sink down into the ease and indifferency of liberalism. The tension of the mind will be fully kept up—only in another direction, and in a better way. If Christians will not then strive so much for the mastery in argument, they will be differently and far more profitably employed—in provoking to love and to good works. They might not be so intent on the work of judging each other, because far more intent on the exercise of judging themselves. Christianity.

will not be so much agitated as a question of opinion between man and man; but far more sedulously prosecuted as a question between God and their own consciences. There will still be ample room for zeal and strenuousness—for an ardour that will burn with as pure and bright a flame, if not so fiercely as before. Ere the church militant shall become the church triumphant, we might still have to fight the battles of principle and of the faith with them who are without; but let us hope that our internal wars will cease, by the differences among ourselves being healed. And let us not imagine that because there will then be the repose of mutual charity and peace, there must therefore be the indolence of quietude. The struggle to be uppermost on the field of championship, will then give way before a kindlier and more generous emulation—the struggle to be foremost in zeal for the glory of God, and for all the services of Christian philanthropy; and this too without the heart-burnings of rivalship or envy. For they will be all the readier in honour to prefer each other—when they shall have become more alive to their own shortcomings than to the perversities or defects of their fellowmen. Even now, and notwithstanding the manifold yet chiefly incidental controversies of our day, men in theology are looking greatly more to the points of agreement, and less to the points of difference—the promise and preparation, let us hope, for a long millennium of peace and prosperity to the Christian world.

LECTURE XCVIII.

ROMANS, xv, 1—13.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

In the two first verses we are told what is the duty of the strong towards the weak—which duty is an obvious practical inference from the principles laid down in the foregoing chapter. It was that they should please their neighbour and not themselves. And yet Paul himself was in one sense any thing but a man-pleaser. In his Epistle to the Galatians, he appears in wholly another character; and so tells us there—"Do I seek to please men? for

if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."[1] And in a former part of this Epistle to the Romans, he says to the commendation of those who had not gained the approval of the Jews by submitting to circumcision, that their praise was not of men but of God. This difference between Paul at one time and Paul at another lay altogether in this. He never sought the praise or pleasure of men as an end; but he often sought it as a means to an end. He sought it when he could serve Christ by it. It would not have served Christ, but the contrary, had he given in to the judaising Christians in the church of Galatia; and, in compliance with their demand, laid the rite of circumcision on their Gentile brethren—and this too on the ground that it was necessary for their salvation. He, had it been placed on the same footing, would also have resisted their abstinence from meats—but not, when, without the concession of any such vital principle, this abstinence subserved the peace or extension of the Christian Church. When these high objects were to be gained—then this thing of indifferency became a thing of duteous obligation; and then not only were the strong taught to bear the infirmities of the weak—but every one was taught, not to please his neighbour, but to please his neighbour for his good to edification. Thus did Paul seek to please men in all things—because not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved.[2]

Ver. 3. 'For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that

[1] Galatians, i, 10. [2] 1 Corinthians, ix, 33.

reproached thee fell on me.' And here this matter of not eating flesh, in itself a perfect trifle, is made to rank with a virtue of the very highest order—the imitation of Christ. 'The quotation here given is from Psalm lxix, 9—the first part of which verse is applied by the apostle John to our Saviour; and the latter in this place by the apostle Paul. There was no pleasure in those reproaches of men, which were borne by our blessed Lord in the work of seeking after and saving them—when He endured the contradiction of sinners, and despised the shame of it. But a still more emphatic application of these words to Jesus Christ is to be found in that vicarious sacrifice which He underwent for the sins of the world—even those sins wherewith so much reproach and dishonour had been cast upon God. The burden of all this was made to fall upon the head of our blessed Saviour, who indeed took it upon Himself; and, by magnifying the law, took off indignity from the Lawgiver. Truly He pleased not Himself, when under the heavy load of the hour and the power of darkness, His soul became exceeding sorrowful, and He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Surely if Christ thus bore the sins of the wicked, we might well bear the infirmities of the weak.

Ver. 4. 'For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.' He had just quoted from the Scriptures; and, to enforce the lesson he had just drawn from them, he comes forth with a general testimony to the worth and the estimation in which

these writings ought to be held. It is true, that they are only the Scriptures of the Old Testament which are here alluded to—or such as were written aforetime—or, immediately, for the instruction of those who lived many centuries back; yet, distantly and universally, for the instruction of the men of all ages. This is only one out of many places in the New Testament, where the 'Scriptures,' though but consisting then of the Hebrew sacred writings, have a power and a sufficiency ascribed to them which now-a-days we are apt to overlook. It is the illustrious testimony of Paul himself that they are able to make us wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.[1] There is a glory and a virtue in these elder Scriptures, which should not be lost sight of. It were well that we made ourselves familiar with the high ascriptions given to them by the Psalmist of old;[2] and still better with the attestations in their favour by Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith—as repeated by His apostles after Him, and from which we assuredly gather that they were written, not for the men of bygone periods only, but also for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come.

'That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope'—through the comfort which they directly give, and through the patience which both Scripture examples and Scripture exhortations are fitted to inspire. The connection of hope with comfort is quite obvious—seeing that hope is the best and likeliest of all topics for ministering consolation to those who may at present have

[1] 2 Timothy, iii, 15. [2] Psalms xix, cxix, &c.

much to bear; and also of hope with patience—seeing that patience worketh experience, and experience hope. The pertinency of this whole consideration to the argument which the apostle is now holding, will appear more distinctly if we recollect, that when he asked the dissentient parties of the church that he was addressing to give up their controversies, they were carrying their differences so far, as to refuse one another the hopes and privileges of their common salvation. There were judaising teachers, we know, who taught that except men were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved.[1] And it would seem as if from the apostle's reasoning, that at least the weak brethren, were apt to look on their opponents as so many reprobates who had forfeited their claims to a blissful immortality; and also that the strong brethren made too little account of the spiritual well-being, and so the ultimate safety of their adversaries, in this contention—wounding their consciences, and perhaps caring not although destroyed by their meats, those disciples should perish for whom Christ died. The great object of the apostle was to convince them that the question now so keenly agitated need not affect the everlasting condition of either party; that both might alike stand unto God and be alike accepted of Him; and that, after having passed through the ordeal of the last judgment, both might be admitted to life everlasting with Him who is Lord of the dead and the living. He therefore bids them cherish both for themselves and others the hope of their common salvation—looking on each other as heirs and ex-

[1] Acts, xv, 1.

pectants now, and to be partakers hereafter of the same glorious inheritance—when they shall ever be at rest, and all their partial and temporary differences here will be lost and forgotten in the reign of an endless and universal charity. Here they speak, and understand, and think, as children; but there, where they shall have attained to manhood, and all shall have become strong, they will put away the childish things—the trifles of their present vain and fruitless controversy.

Ver. 5. 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus,' 'The God of patience and consolation'—the expression varied here from comfort to consolation, though not in the original—where the reference therefore to the very terms of the last verse is all the more distinct in the ascription given to God, as the God of patience and comfort—or as the Giver of these graces, which He is, when He strengthens us "with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."[1] We are here reminded of what is said of God the Father in 2 Cor. i, 3, 4—"The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The sympathy of a common hope, begetting the sense of a common interest, would in every good and Christian mind, beget also the fellowship of a common or mutual charity, and so make them "like-minded one to another;" and it is added, "according to Christ

[1] Colossians i, 11.

Jesus," or after the example of Christ Jesus—even the example which he had already quoted in the third verse. The patience and comfort, it might have been said, though from God, are nevertheless through the Scriptures—the one being the Source of all our graces, the other their channel of conveyance. And the like-mindedness of this verse has certainly in it as one ingredient at least, that of which in Philippians, ii, 2, this like-mindedness is said to consist—even in having the same love, of one accord, of one mind—under the influence of which spirit nothing would be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind each would esteem other better than themselves.

Ver. 6. But it is evident from this verse, that the like-mindedness here does not lie exclusively in this fellowship of a mutual charity one for another. It points also to the common direction of their minds towards one and the same object—that object being the glory of God. They may differ in certain observances; but what he wants of them is that they shall agree in this. Let him that regardeth the day regard it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord let him not regard it. In like manner, let him who eateth, and him who eateth not, agree in giving God thanks, and in giving God glory. This they should do with one mind; and, he adds, with one mouth. With our mind we must think the same things, ere with our mouth we can speak the same things. Were we then more slow to speak of the things on which we differ, and more ready to speak of the things on which we agree, it would mightily con-

duce to the peace and unity of the visible church. The members of the church at Rome differed in regard both to meats and days; and Paul as good as enjoined silence about these, when he bade them receive each other, but not to doubtful disputations. But, on the other hand, he bids them join with one mouth, as well as one mind, in giving glory to God. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."[1]

'Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This is the peculiar aspect in which, as Christians, we regard God. Did we but view Him as the God of Natural Theology—apart from Christ, and out of Christ—there might be a fearfulness toward God, but no fellowship. It is our looking to Him, and so trusting in Him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—it is this, which, specifically and characteristically, marks our entrance on the religion of the gospel. Then begins our fellowship with the Father and with the Son—the best of all preparatives, according to the apostle John, for our having fellowship one with another.[2] And so it follows in

Ver. 7. 'Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.' He winds up his argument on this topic, by re-echoing what he had said at the outset of it. He bids them receive one another, even by bearing one another. Surely if Christ made our sins no obstacle in the way of our reception, and that too at the time when we were enemies, we should make their infirmities no obstacle to the reception of those who are our brethren—weak brethren, they may be; but it will

[1] Philip. iii, 16. [2] 1 John, i, 3, 7.

make us all the liker to our Saviour, who was meek and lowly in heart, if we bear ourselves with a peculiar gentleness towards them, seeing that we are required not to strive, but to be gentle towards all men.[1] He had compassion on them who were out of the way; and far more grievously out of it, than those erring or over-scrupulous disciples, in whose behalf and for whose indulgence Paul is now pleading. Surely if Christ adopted us into God's family, we should adopt one another into our fellowship. And "to the glory of God" too. He effected peace on earth in the way that brought glory to God in the highest. He reconciled us sinners unto God—yet so as to exalt His authority, and make all the glories of His character stand out in brighter manifestation than ever, to the eyes both of angels and of men. He received and recognised us as the children of His own Father, and so as His own brethren; but on such a footing as nevertheless redounded to the vindication and honour of the divine perfections: And it was indeed a signal triumph over difficulties insuperable to all but Him—when out of such materials as the guilty aliens of the human race, both Jews and Gentiles, He gained such large accessions to the spiritual household of the faithful. Let us not impair this household, or narrow its limits—whether in reality, or in our own imaginations—whether by offences, on the one hand, as when we wound the consciences of the weak, and perhaps destroy those for whom Christ died; or by our intolerant and exclusive sectarianism on the other, as when we say that without certain ceremonial observances men cannot be saved.

[1] 2 Timothy, ii, 24.

Let us not thus defeat the sacred policy of Him, who opened the door of admission for the world at large. Let Gentiles give up their contempt, and Jews give up their bigotry; and as Christ received both, let both receive one another. Let us do nothing to break off this fellowship; or to mutilate that church, by which is shown to the universe the manifold wisdom of God.[1] It is therefore well added—that we should receive each other 'to the glory of God'—for it were indeed a minishing of His glory, thus to abridge the extent and entireness of that great temple, the materials whereof are gathered out of all nations, and of which Christ Himself is the chief corner-stone.

Ver. 8–12. 'Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.' As he draws towards the close of his epistle, he seems as if to redouble his strenuousness for the fulfilment of its main object—which was the establishment of a common understanding between Jews and Gentiles—a full settlement of all the unhappy differences betwixt them. To effectuate this his favourite design, on which it is obvious that his whole heart

[1] Ephesians, iii, 10.

was set, he puts forth all his powers of persuasion; and he evidently feels that his chief attempt must be to soften the prejudices of the Jewish understanding—or that his most necessary, as well as hardest task, was to propitiate and reconcile the minds of his own countrymen, all whose partialities had been violently thwarted by the free admission of Gentiles into the church, and more especially when accompanied with the indulgence of being exempted from the obligations of the ceremonial law. We can fancy as if it were in the spirit of his own characteristic policy, and to appease the wounded vanity of the Jews, that in the 8th verse he sets forth Jesus Christ Himself as being in His own person the direct minister of the circumcision—whereas afterwards he puts himself forward as being the humble minister under Christ for the conversion of the Gentiles. Certain it is that our Saviour, while on earth, very much restricted His ministrations to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But the great instrumentality employed by our apostle, and which he most wielded for gaining over the Jews, was a plentiful quotation of their own Scriptures. This was precisely what our Saviour Himself did, when, to do away another of their national antipathies, even the revolt which they all felt in the notion of a crucified Messiah—He argued from Moses and the Prophets, that Christ ought to have suffered these things, expounding "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." And thus too Paul has recourse to a scriptural demonstration; and brings both psalms and prophecies to witness that the truth of God was as much committed to the admission of

the Gentiles within the pale of gospel mercy, as to the fulfilment of the promises made on behalf of the Jews in the ears of those patriarchs from whom they had descended.

Ver. 13. 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Having thus merged the distinction between these two classes, he makes them both the objects of a common invocation—and this in one of the most pregnant and precious verses of the Bible. The God whom he thus calls upon is designed by him 'the God of hope'—just because He is the Author of this grace, making us to 'abound in hope'—even as a little before He is called the God of patience and comfort, because He works in us these graces also—strengthening us "with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

There are certain weighty lessons enveloped in the brief but emphatic sentence now before us, and some of which we shall slightly touch upon.

Our first remark is founded on the comparison of the 4th and 13th verses—whence we are made to perceive the identity of that effect which is ascribed to the Scriptures on the one hand, and to the Holy Ghost upon the other. In the first of these the apostle directs the attention of his disciples to the things 'which were written aforetime,' that through the Scriptures they might have hope. In the second, he prays for the same disciples, that they 'may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' The respective functions of the

Word and Spirit are thus brought into view; and more especially this important truth—that, though perfectly distinct from each other, their joint operation on the soul of man issues, not in two different results, but in one and the same result. The reason is, that the one is the agent, and the other the instrument, of one and the same service. And so the word of God is called the sword of the Spirit.[1] It is that which He works by. When He enlightens, it is by opening the understanding to understand the Scriptures; and when He impresses, it is by giving the influence and power of moral suasion to the lessons of Scripture. It might help perhaps to alleviate the mysteriousness of certain passages in the Bible—if the comparing of spiritual things with spiritual, we understand to be the comparing of scriptural things with scriptural, and the things of the Spirit were regarded as the things of Scripture spiritually discerned. We should then be at no loss to harmonise the saying that we are born again of the Spirit,[2] with the saying that we are born again by the word of God.[3] And as both co-operate in the work of our regeneration, so both co-operate in the production of each special grace that belongs to the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The joy and peace here spoken of are both to be understood subjectively—or in the sense of mental affections, wherewith it is the prayer of the apostle that his disciples should be filled. It is not the joy which there is in heaven over a sinner that repenteth, but the joy felt by the sinner himself when he

[1] Ephesians, vi, 17. [2] John, iii, 3, 5. [3] 1 Peter, i 23.

comes to have the faith of the gospel. Neither is it the peace which there is in the heart of the Godhead towards us, when, on our acceptance of His Son as our Saviour, His purposes of wrath and vengeance against us are turned away. But it is the peace which enters our own hearts, when, visited by the sense of forgiveness, or by the conviction that God hath ceased from His anger, we cease from all our disquietudes because of it. And more than this. Not only are we relieved from the terrors of a coming vengeance, but also from those sensations of disquietude which might else have agonised us, amid the vexations or vicissitudes of the life that soon passeth away. Because of the glorious prospect beyond it, we are calm—even when beset with tribulation; or are not troubled as other men. This peace of our text is of a more negative character than the joy of our text; yet it too admits of degrees—the strength of it being rightly estimated by the magnitude of those trials, under which we maintain the serenity of our spirits notwithstanding. In the world, our Saviour tells us, we shall have tribulation; but in Him we shall have peace: And, as a proof that it admits of being increased and strengthened, it is said in one place to be a peace so great that it passeth all understanding; and it is spoken of by Isaiah as the privilege of God's reconciled children, that they will delight greatly in the abundance of their peace—a peace of such depth and stability, that it is conceived of by the same prophet, as flowing through the heart like a mighty river—the surface of which might be ruffled by the passing wind that blows

over it, while all is stillness, all is tranquil and beyond the reach of disturbance within and below.

There is as great a complexional variety in the experience of Christians, as there is in the natural temperaments of men. It is because of this constitutional difference, that while the faith of the gospel works joy in the heart of one man, it works peace in another. And so we read of death-beds of ecstacy, and also of death-beds of calm and settled assurance—the latter evincing, it is possible, as strong a degree of faith, though unaccompanied by the raptures of a lively and overpowering manifestation.

And what is worthy of our special notice is, that both the joy and the peace may be felt in the direct exercise of believing. They may flow, and flow immediately, from the faith of the gospel—without aught to intervene between them. Those would throw a sad obscuration on the freeness of the gospel, and greatly embarrass the outset of an enquirer who is groping for an entrance on the way of salvation—who insist that ere joy or peace can be felt, there must be some subjective ground of experience on which to sustain it. There can be no doubt that the subjective in Christianity does minister both joy and peace to the believer—as when Paul rejoiced in the testimony of his conscience; and John could tell that when his heart condemned him not, then had he confidence towards God. But when one principle is admitted, must it always be at this expence—the exclusion or extinction of another equally legitimate, and equally indispensable to the Christian state and the Christian cha-

racter? There are a peace and a joy in the subjective—or on our finding what good things have been worked in us by the Spirit of God. But distinct from this, and I should say anterior to this, there are also a peace and a joy in the objective—or on our believing what good things have been spoken to us by the word of God, and to be felt immediately on our giving credence to them—A peace and a joy which emanate directly from the sayings of Scripture; and such sayings too as are addressed, not to disciples only, but to yet unconverted sinners also. Would not the man whom we had injured, and of whom we had good reason to be afraid—did he stand before us with an angry or menacing countenance—would not he be the object of our dread and disquietude, and this simply on our view of the objective? And on the other hand, did his countenance bespeak a readiness for peace and pardon, would not terror give way to confidence—and that simply too on our view of the objective? And does the Lawgiver make no such exhibition of Himself in the gospel of Jesus Christ, as when He looks compassion on the children of men, or sets forth His own Son as the propitiation for the sins of the world? But there are sounds as well as sights of encouragement, words which are the direct bearers of comfort to the soul, a proclamation of amnesty as well as a flag of amnesty; and which, as coming from without, are objective things external to ourselves, and, apart from ourselves, fitted to light up an immediate gladness in our bosoms, did we but open our eyes or our ears to them—as surely as when the wise men from the

east saw the star over Bethlehem, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; or as surely as the shepherds who first heard the proclamation of good-will from the sky, and saw the babe in the manger, glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. We cannot well imagine how any tidings should be designated tidings of great joy—unless they had the property of making joyful, simply and immediately on our believing them—and this without any thought bestowed upon ourselves, or subjective regards cast downwardly or inwardly on our own spirit, or on the state of our own hearts and characters. It is thus that there are a peace and joy in believing what we read of God, and of God in Christ, in our bibles—as when He swears by Himself that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that all should come unto Him and live; or beseeches us to enter into reconciliation; or assures us that whosoever cometh unto His Son shall in no wise be cast out; and that if we so come, our sins, though as crimson, should become as wool, though as scarlet, should be made whiter than the snow. The ministers of the gospel are the heralds of a universal proclamation—a proclamation of mercy, in the believing of which there are instant peace and joy.

But neither would we exclude the subjective as being a ground of peace and joy also. Nay we will admit that there must be a certain harmony between the objective and the subjective at the very outset of our Christianity. The same heavenly Teacher and Saviour who says, Come unto me all

and I will receive you, says also, He who cometh unto me must forsake all. There are here both an invitation and a declaration. I cannot imagine, notwithstanding the perfect fulness and freeness of the one, how any man could come confidently or rejoice in the faith—if in the face of the other, he was not honestly desirous of forsaking all sin, and making an entire surrender of himself to the will of Christ. If at all conscious of this reservation or of this duplicity, it will make him incapable of clearly or confidently believing—or, in other words, an evil conscience will darken faith. But this does not preclude the importance, nay even the necessity, of setting forth in full presentation before the eye of the mind the objective truths of Christianity, the objects that faith must have to rest upon; and the fruit of this on all truly earnest enquirers, or in other words, on all good and honest hearts, will be peace and joy. And this whether they be looking inwardly on their hearts or no. Nay you must give them time to look outwardly on the tidings from heaven ere they can rejoice; and in virtue of their hearts being good and honest (a goodness and honesty which abide, and stand them in stead, even when they are not looking inwardly)—in virtue of this singleness of eye, and singleness of purpose, will their whole bodies be full of light;[1] and they will see clearly outward these objects of vision, because within them there is a clear medium of vision. And there is a counterpart to this in them who want singleness of eye, or whose hearts are full of duplicity, and so of darkness;[2] and to whom therefore the objects of faith, bereft of all luminousness,

[1] Matthew, vi, 22, 23. [2] Matthew, vi, 23.

might be preached or presented—but in vain. Still it is our duty to preach at a venture—that to the good and honest it might be the savour of life unto life, although it should be the savour of death unto death to all other hearers. In the simple exercise of believing they will have hope—the hope is yet of faith only, and not till afterwards the hope of experience. But the stronger the faith is, and the hope founded upon it—the brighter will the experience be, and the hope also which is founded upon it. These two will work like conspiring influences, which keep pace together, and work into each other's hands. For the more vigorous the faith, the more vigorous also will be the obedience. The faith and the good conscience will thus grow with each other's growth, and strengthen with each other's strength—whereas if we cast away our good conscience, of our faith we shall make shipwreck.

And it is the Holy Ghost who causeth us to abound in both—in the hope that cometh directly from the objective, by taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us; and in the hope that cometh reflexly from the subjective, by working in us those personal graces, whence men take knowledge of us, and we may also take knowledge of ourselves, that we are indeed the disciples of Jesus. He is alike the author of the hope that springs from the inherent, and of the hope that springs from the imputed righteousness—of the one when experience worketh hope, by the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost given to us;[1] of the other, when through the Spirit we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

[1] Romans, v, 5.

LECTURE XCIX.

ROMANS, xv, 14—33.

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea;

and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

VER. 14. Paul, in drawing towards the close of his epistle, seems, with the characteristic delicacy which breaks forth in many other passages, to feel that he must apologise for the freedom of his exhortations. The likest thing to it in any of the other apostles, is when Peter tells the disciples to whom he writes, that he addresses them, not to inform as if they were ignorant persons; but to stir up their pure minds in the way of remembrance —and this though they already knew the things of which he was reminding them, and though they were established in the present truth.[1] And so Paul, as if to soften the effect of his dictations—and this though his manner was the farthest possible from that of a dictator—tells his converts of his persuasion that they were filled with knowledge and goodness; and that though he took it upon him to admonish them, he was sure nevertheless that they were able to admonish one another. The truth is, that neither the greatest knowledge, nor the greatest goodness, supersedes the necessity of our being often told the same things over again. Men might thoroughly know their duty, and yet stand constantly in need to be reminded of their duty. The great use of moral suasion is not that thereby people should be made to know, but should be led to consider. And thus our Sabbaths and other seasons of periodical instruction, are of the greatest

[1] 2 Peter, i. 12-14; iii. 1.

possible service although there should be no dealing in novelties at all—though but to recal the sacred truths which are apt to be forgotten, and renew the good impressions which might else be dissipated among the urgencies of the world. Whether then an apostle should write, or a minister should substantially present the same things, it ought not to be grievous, because it is safe.[1] He speaks but as the helper of his congregation, and not as having dominion over them.[2] He is but an instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is, not merely to teach what is new, but to recal what is old—to bring all things to remembrance.[3] It is true that they might already have received the gospel, and that in the gospel they stand—Yet they shall have believed in vain, unless they keep in memory that which has been preached unto them.[4] In keeping with this, Paul says in the 15th verse that he writes, not to inform but to put in mind.

Ver. 15, 16. 'Nevertheless,' brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.' Still further to conciliate their toleration for his advices, he tells them of the large warrant that he had received from God Himself, and by which he was fully authorised to act the part of

[1] Philippians, iii, 1. [2] 2 Corinthians, i, 24.
[3] John, xiv, 26. [4] 1 Corinthians, xv, 2.

their instructor. Instead of being dissatisfied, they might well have felt most grateful for the distinction conferred on them by the message of an ambassador invested with such powers and credentials from heaven. At the same time, the special designation of himself, which he here intimates, of Apostle to the Gentiles, while it excused the liberties which he took with them, might help to mitigate the discontent of his other and more impracticable disciples the Jews—inasmuch as it explained and justified his peculiar zeal for their privilege of exemption from the servitudes of the Mosaic ritual, in behalf of those who had been given to him as his own peculiar charge. That he had the Jews in his eye, and was still laying himself out to propitiate their favour, seems probable from the sacrificial style in which he describes the service that had been put into his hands. He represents himself as the minister of Christ[1]—in which office he does the work of a priest with the gospel,[2]—his offering[3] being the Gentile converts, who, anointed by the Holy Ghost, were made acceptable thereby, even as the meat-offering of the Jews, which had oil and frankincense poured upon it, arose with a sweet savour unto the Lord.

Ver. 17. 'I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.' Paul's object in glorying was not to magnify himself, but to constrain a willing and wholesome submission to the lessons which he gave forth, in his capacity as steward of Heaven's high mysteries. His glorying was all through Jesus Christ; and the things of which he was the dispenser did not

[1] Λειτουργος. [2] Ἱερουργῶν. [3] Προσφορα.

pertain to him but to God. His functions were wholly ministerial; and nothing can exceed the perfect humility as well as wisdom wherewith he discharged them. All that he arrogated to himself was the office of a servant, though it was a service so honourable and so signalised, as would above measure and unduly have exalted many other men.

Ver. 18, 19. 'For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.' There is a peculiarity in the mode of expression here, which may perhaps be ascribed to the sensitive repugnance of our apostle to aught like the assumption of superiority over other men. There can be no doubt that he was pre-eminently, though not exclusively the apostle of the Gentiles—Yet he will not say that he will dare to speak of the things which Christ had done by him, but that he will not dare to speak of the things which Christ had not done by him—thus modestly recognising the contribution of other men's labours in a cause, where he himself had been the chief labourer; and far the most powerful instrument in the hand of God for its success and advancement in the world. This could not be disguised—so that after leading his readers to understand that there were others who shared along with him in the great achievement of making the Gentiles obedient through mighty signs and wonders, and leaving them to imagine how great this share

might be—he could not avoid the direct statement of his own apostolical work, in that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum he had fully preached the gospel of Christ.

'Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.' It is not likely that Paul would have made mention at all of these miracles, had they not been wrought at Rome us well as in other places along his apostolical tour, where churches had been planted by him. At all events, he in epistles to other churches, does appeal to the miracles which had been wrought in the midst of them. For example, in the free and fearless remonstrance which he held with the Galatians, he puts the question with all boldness—"O foolish Galatians"—"he that ministereth to you the Spirit and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" [1] And in the enumeration which he makes of the powers conferred on various of the church office-bearers, he tells the Corinthians that to one is given by the Spirit of God the working of miracles; and, more specifically still, to another the gifts of healing, and to another divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.[2] And again, in another epistle to the same people, he says, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." [3] In this respect he tells them that they were not inferior to other churches; nor is it probable that he would have written of these miracles to his converts at Rome, had they been in this state of inferiority to others.

[1] Gal. iii, 1, 5. [2] 1 Cor. xii, 9, 10. [3] 2 Cor. xii, 12.

There cannot then be imagined a more satisfactory historical evidence for these high and undoubted credentials of a divine mission, than we are able to adduce for the miracles which abounded in the primitive churches, and for those in particular which were worked by Paul's own hands. He indeed, in common with the other apostles, possessed the endowment in a degree that might be called transcendental—insomuch as, beside having the gift of miracles, they had the power, by the laying on of their hands, of conferring this gift upon others.[1] Now whatever exhibition might have been made of such things at Rome—certain it is that for miracles both at Corinth and in Galatia, we have testimony in such a form as makes it quite irresistible. Here we have, in the custody of these two churches from the earliest times, the epistles which they had received from Paul—the original documents having been long in their own possession, while copies of them were speedily multiplied and diffused over the whole Christian world. In these records do we find Paul in vindication of his own apostleship, and in the course of a severe reckoning with the people whom he addresses, make a confident appeal to the miracles which had been wrought before their eyes. Had there been imposture here, the members of these two churches would not have lent their aid to uphold it. They would not have professed the faith which they did on pretensions which they knew to be false, and that for the support of a claim to divine authority now brought to bear in remonstrance and rebuke against themselves. We might multiply at

[1] Acts, viii, 13, &c.

pleasure our suspicions of Paul, and conjure up all sorts of imaginations against him; but no possible explanation can be found for the acquiescence of his converts in the treachery of the apostle, or rather of their becoming parties to his fabrication, if fabrication indeed it was. One can fancy an interest, which he might have in a scheme of deception; but what earthly interest can we assign for the part which they took in the deception, knowing it to be so? Or on what other hypothesis than the irresistible truth of these miracles, can we explain their adherence to the gospel, and that in the face of losses and persecutions, nay even of cruel martyrdoms—but over and above all this, the taunts and cutting reproaches to the bargain, of the very man who could tell them of the miracles which themselves had seen, as the vouchers of his embassy from God; and threatened, if necessary, to come amongst them with a rod, and make demonstration in the midst of them of his authority and power? Had there been deceit and jugglery in the matter, why did they not let out the secret, and rid themselves at once and for ever of this burdensome visitation? The truth is, that the overpowering evidence from without, and their own consciences within, would not let them. There is no other historical evidence which in clearness and certainty comes near to this. And whether we look to the integrity of these original witnesses, men faithful and tried; or to the abundant and continuous and closely sustained testimony which flowed downward in well filled vehicles from the first age of the apostles—we are compelled to acknowledge a sureness

and a stamp of authenticity in the miracles of the gospel, not only unsurpassed but unequalled by any other events, the knowledge of which has been transmitted from ancient to modern times.

Ver. 20, 21. 'Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation; but, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.' Not that Paul would have withheld the benefit of his instructions from those who were already Christians, if they came in his way. But what he strove for and sought after, was to enter on altogether new ground—deeming it more his vocation to extend and spread abroad Christianity, by the planting of new churches—than to build up or perfect the churches which had been already founded. There seems to have been a remulation in these days among the first teachers of the gospel, which betokens that even they were not altogether free from the leaven which Paul had detected in his own converts, when he charged them with being yet carnal.[1] There was something amongst them like a vain-glorious rivalship in the work of proselytising—insomuch that the credit of their respective shares in the formation of a Christian church was a matter of competition and jealousy. Our apostle wanted to keep altogether clear of this, and to be wholly aloof from the temptation of it—as indeed he himself intimates in 2 Cor. x, 15, 16, where he tells us that he would not boast of other men's labours, or in another man's line of things made ready to his hand. Certain it is, that while

[1] 1 Corinthians, iii, 4.

he refrained from building on another man's foundation, he experienced no little disturbance from other men building on the foundation which he himself had laid—and these not only the false teachers, but even men who were true at bottom—yet would, like Peter at Antioch, have laid some of their wood and hay and stubble thereupon.

The prophet from whom Paul here quotes, had the Gentiles chiefly in his eye; and to be their apostle was his peculiar destination.[1] This, however, was not a mere arbitrary appointment; for we read that he was chosen to this office, because of his peculiar qualifications. He was a wise master-builder, who could lay well the foundation.[2] He had the talent beyond other men to begin at the beginning—or to lay down what he himself calls the *principles* of the doctrine of Christ.[3] No one could excel him in the admirable skill wherewith he made his first outset, when reasoning with those to whom the doctrine of Christ was as yet a perfect novelty; and such being his *forte*, if we may thus express ourselves on such a subject, we cannot wonder that it was also his favourite walk to speak unto those who had not yet seen or heard the truth, and address himself to those who had no previous notice or understanding of it. We meet with manifold traces of this distinct and distinguishing power in our great apostle—the power of taking up a right vantage-ground whence to date his argument, or on which to rear his demonstration in behalf of the gospel. We can discern the faculty of which we

[1] Acts, xxii, 21. [2] Ἀρχιτέκτων; 1 Cor. iii, 10.
[3] Ἀρχή; Heb. vi, 1.

now speak, in his speech before Agrippa and his address to the people of Athens. But it was a faculty which availed him in his converse with Jews as well as Gentiles—the former in fact often standing at as great, and in some respects a greater distance than the latter from the first rudiments, or as he himself terms it, the first principles of the oracles of God. It is obvious that thus to commence aright with any one, respect must be had to his special state or habitudes of mind—so as to fit in the initial consideration with the initial prejudices or tendencies of those whom he was addressing. We have repeated exhibitions of this in the history of Paul—of the judgment wherewith he took a right point of departure; or set up a right starting-post, when his object was to find an access and an acceptance into the minds of men for the truth of Christianity—As with idolaters, when he reasoned with them out of their own superstition; or with scholars, when he reasoned with them out of their own literature;[1] or with Pharisees, when he reasoned with them from the tenets of their own sect;[2] or with Israelites in general, when he reasoned with them out of their own Scriptures. But the amplest memorials of this rare and remarkable gift, in the most gifted of all the apostles, are his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and most of all his epistle to the Hebrews—in all of which he lays himself out more expressly, it is true, for the Jewish understanding; but in that way of skilful opening, as well as skilful adaptation and approach, which showed that he stood the highest of all his colleagues as an accomplished tactician in the warfare

[1] Acts, xvii. [2] Acts, xxiii, 6.

of minds—or who best knew how he should address himself to this work of laying siege, as it were, to men's understandings, and this for the achievement of a victory over them—And so could be all things to all men, that he might gain some. No wonder then that his delight and his preference was to put himself to the task he was best fitted for—whether to make a first encounter with Jewish prejudices, or as a pioneer in the wilderness of heathenism. To express it otherwise, if there was one stage in the process of the spiritual manufacture which he liked better to deal with than another, it seems to have been the first stage of it; when he had to deal with the raw material, or with minds in the greatest possible state of rudeness and alienation from the gospel of Jesus Christ—whether by grossest ignorance, as with barbarians; or by contempt and bigotry, as with Jews upon the one hand, and yet unconverted Greeks upon the other.

Ver. 22–24. 'For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.' It is obvious, that in the multitude of such engagements, he could not be so frequent in his attentions or visits to the churches that had been already formed. And it is accordingly on this ground that he apologises for his lengthened absence from the Christians at Rome. 'For which cause also I

have been much hindered from coming to you.' He had had a great desire for many years to make out a visit; and states this in the next verse, in order that they might accept of the will for the deed. He pleads the hindrance of his incessant occupation in those regions where Christ had not been before named; and it is interesting to note what it was that released him from this hindrance. It was because that now he had 'no more place in these parts.' Paul might come to know, by a direct intimation from the Spirit, that God had no more work to do in these parts—even as we read in the book of Acts of his being bidden go to some places and restrained or hindered from others.[1] It is not to be supposed that Paul filled up the various regions which he had visited with the preaching of the gospel—though he might have left a church in each of the larger towns, as a centre of emanation whence others might propagate the religion of Jesus Christ through the countries around them. And even where he preached with little or no success, he might be said to have no more place in that part—no more, for example, at Athens, although he left it a mass of nearly unalleviated darkness—just as our Lord's immediate apostles might well be said to have no more place in those towns that rejected their testimony, and against which they were called to shake off the dust of their feet, and then to take their departure—fleeing from the cities which either refused or persecuted them, and turning to others. The way in fact of apostles or ministers, the outward instruments in the teaching of

[1] Acts, xvi, 6, 7; xviii, 9, 10; xix, 21.

Christianity, is the same with the way of the Spirit, who is the real agent in this teaching, by giving to their word all its efficacy. He may visit every man; but withdraws Himself from those who resist Him—just as the missionaries of the gospel might visit every place, and have fulfilled their work even in those places where the gospel has been put to scorn, and so become the savour of death unto death to the people who live in them. Yet we must not slacken in our endeavours for the evangelisation of the whole earth, although the only effect should be that the gospel will be preached unto all nations for a witness, and the success of the enterprise will be limited by the gathering in of the elect from the four corners of heaven.

It is a matter of unsettled controversy whether Paul ever was in Spain, or was able to fulfil his purpose of a free and voluntary journey to Rome—his only recorded journey there being when taken up as a prisoner in chains. At the beginning of the epistle he tells them of his prayer; and here expresses his hope of again seeing them in circumstances of prosperity, when, after a full and satisfactory enjoyment of their society, he might be helped forward by them on his way to the country beyond. Let me here notice in passing, how accordant the movements both of Paul beyond Judea, and of our Saviour and the apostles within its limits, as described in the Gospels and Acts—are with the abiding geography of towns and countries still before our eyes. It is in itself a pleasing exercise to trace this harmony of Scripture with the known bearings and distances of places still; and even serves the

purpose of confirmation as a monumental evidence to the truth of Christianity.

Ver. 25–27. 'But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.' Paul however had an intermediate duty to perform, ere he could fulfil his purpose of a journey to Rome. He had to go to Jerusalem with the produce of the charities of the faithful, gathered in Macedonia and Achaia for the necessities of the poor and persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. This very collection is referred to in several other places;[1] and the comparison of scripture with scripture is also a pleasing and confirmatory exercise. This is not the first time that such an exertion of liberality had been made for the destitute brethren in Judea, as we read in Acts, xi, 30; xii, 25. The truth is, that the Jewish were sooner the objects of persecution than the Gentile Christians—the effects of which seem to have been first felt by the lower classes—deprived in all likelihood of their custom and employment, in consequence of the ill-will conceived against them by those on whom they wont to depend for the means of their subsistence. It was for their relief that the wealthier converts who were beyond the reach of any immediate suffering from this cause, made the generous surrender of all their property.[2] This resource appears to have been at length exhausted, when the

[1] 2 Corinthians, viii, 4; ix, 13. [2] Acts, iv, 34-37.

appeal in their favour was at length carried abroad over the Christian world at large. The charity at home, however, nobly did its part, ere the charity at a distance was called for or drawn upon.

'And their debtors they are.' He here accredits the Jewish Christians generally and nationally, as being the dispensers of the gospel to the Gentiles —though properly they were but the teachers and apostles who came forth of Jerusalem that were entitled to the honour of this consideration, and to a grateful return because of it. It is in this more proper and restricted sense that he pleads for the right both of himself and Barnabas to a livelihood from the Church at Corinth.[1] But it is not unnatural, when any signal benefit has been conferred by the members of a certain community, to feel as if an acknowledgment were due on that account to the whole collective body of whom they form a part; and Paul avails himself of this disposition when pleading for the poor saints of Jerusalem, because of the blessings which had emanated from Jerusalem on all the churches, though the great majority of these poor saints had personally no hand in them. It were well if we of the present day felt similarly to this. It is true that they are not the Jews who are now in the world to whom we owe our spiritual privileges as Christians; but still let us indulge the thought of a gratitude being due to them, because of the mighty benefits that we have received from their ancestors, from men of their nation in other days, from the prophets and apostles of old, who bequeathed to us the oracles of God; and who in dispensing the word of life among the nations, were

[1] 1 Corinthians, ix.

chief instruments for the fulfilment at length of the promise made to their great ancestor—that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. It is a reproach to Christians that this consideration has not operated more powerfully in favour of the Jewish people—so as to have made them the objects of a far higher benevolence, both in things spiritual and temporal, than they have ever yet experienced at our hands.

'For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.' The comparison in respect of magnitude and worth between spiritual and carnal things, is still more distinctly made in 1 Cor. ix, 11—where the apostle speaks of the right which he and Barnabas had earned to a maintenance from their hands. In this matter too there is great room for the condemnation of professing Christians—because of their gross practical insensibility to the rule of equity here laid down; and which is strikingly evinced throughout Protestant countries in particular, by the extreme feebleness and defect of the voluntary principle for the support of ministers of religion. It is in virtue of this, that the instructors even of large and opulent congregations, have often so pitiful and parsimonious an allowance doled out to them; and if so wretched a proportion of their own carnal be given in return for spiritual things to themselves, we are not to wonder at the still more paltry and inadequate contributions which are made by them for the spiritual things of others. The expence of all missionary schemes and enterprises put together, a mere scantling of the wealth of all Christendom,

argues it to be still a day of exceeding small things —a lesson still more forcibly held out to us by the thousands and tens of thousands, at our own doors who are perishing for lack of knowledge. There is a carnal as well as a spiritual benevolence. That the carnal benevolence makes some respectable head against the carnal selfishness of our nature, is evinced by the fact, that so very few are ever known to die of actual starvation. That the spiritual benevolence falls miserably behind the other, is evinced by the fact of those millions and millions more in our empire, who, purely from want of the churches which ought to be built, and of ministers who ought to be maintained for them, are left to wander all their days beyond the pale of gospel ordinances—and so to live in guilt and die in utter darkness. Verily in such a contemplation, it might well be said even of this professing age—Are ye not yet altogether carnal?

Ver. 28. 'When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.' To seal here is to make sure or to consummate. When I am conclusively done with this business, when I have brought the fruit of Christian liberality which has been put into my hands to Jerusalem, and delivered it to the apostles there for distribution among the poor saints—then will I come by you into Spain.

Ver. 29. 'And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.' There are manuscripts in which the word 'for gospel' is omitted, and where nevertheless a complete sense is retained—'I am

sure that when I do come, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.' Of this one thing, or main thing, he was sure; but there are certain other things of detail and circumstance in this whole anticipation, of which he is not so sure. In chap. i, 10, 11, he speaks of his prosperous journey to Rome as but a prayer and thing of longing desirousness; in i, 15, of his preaching there as but a purpose; in xv, 23, of his future visit to them as an earnest wish; in xv, 24, of his journey to Spain as being yet a contingency, and his seeing the church at Rome in his way as no more than a confident expectation; lastly, of his coming to them on his road to Spain as a determination: And, to crown all, as a certainty and absolute certainty—that when he did come, or if he should come, he would come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, or blessing of Him who was the Author and Finisher of the gospel. It marks most strikingly the shortsightedness of men, even of men inspired on certain occasions and for certain purposes, as contrasted with the counsel of that God which alone shall stand—it most emphatically tells of His ways as not being our ways—that the hopes, nay the prayers of an apostle, reinforced by the prayers which he requested from his people for a prosperous journey to Rome, were all frustrated—So that, instead of a joyful procession to his friends in the world's metropolis, he came to them as a criminal in fetters, a captive in the hands of unbelievers. It is thus that the things of which he was only hopeful or desirous were disposed of; but the thing of which he felt assured had its fixed accomplishment. He did come to Rome fully charged

with spiritual blessings, and which he fully and freely delivered to the people there. "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him—preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Ver. 30–33. 'Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.' He seems to make appeal here to that love in their hearts which the Spirit worketh—the love more especially which Christians who have passed from death unto life bear in their hearts for each other; and under the promptings of which it behoved them to pray for the safety of him who was their spiritual father. His request for such a prayer implies a sense of danger in the mind of the apostle—an apprehension fully warranted by his knowledge of the deadly hatred borne him by the Jews; and against which he in this very journey took the precaution mentioned in Acts, xx, 3. It is perhaps not so easy to explain why he should stand in any doubt of his service being accepted by the saints at Jerusalem. But many of them too were jealous, and did not like his partiality for the Gentiles—nay, it was possible, might have disdained

the receiving of any charity at their hands. On this matter therefore, as on every other, he desired to relieve his carefulness, by making his requests known unto God,[1]—both from his own mouth, and through the mouths of his interceding brethren. It is worthy of being noted, that the next object, his coming unto them with joy, he asks to be prayed for with a submissive reference to the will of God. It may be regarded as the sample of a conditional as distinguished from an absolute prayer. We know of certain things which expressly and at all times are agreeable to the will of God, and for these we might pray without any qualification—as for our knowledge of the truth, and our growth in the divine life, and our final salvation; and generally for all spiritual blessings. For temporal blessings we might pray also; but, with the exception of daily bread, and things absolutely needful for the life and the body, respecting which we have the declared will and promise of God—for all other blessings of an earthly description, we should pray with a salvo, laying our wants and wishes before God, while subjecting them withal to God's good pleasure. The things of this class, when prayed for, may or may not be conceded to us; but at all events, as the fruit of this believing intercourse with Heaven, the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus[2]—even that peace which is the subject of the apostle's closing benediction, and of which no tribulations or adversities can deprive us.[3] And therefore with an unfaltering amen could he pray—'The God of peace be with you all.'

[1] Philip. iv, 6. [2] Philip. iv, 6, 7. [3] John, xvi, 33.

LECTURE C.

ROMANS, xvi.

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Salute Appelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf; but yet I would have you, wise

unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

This whole chapter, filled with the salutations of respect and cordiality—not only from Paul direct to his correspondents, but from the friends and companions who were with Paul to those whom he was addressing—evinces how much Christianity is fitted to promote the interchange of such feelings between man and man. We are here presented with the forms and homages of our own modern politeness, animated by the spirit and sincerity of the gospel—forms which, though but in themselves the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision, are yet befitting vehicles for the best and highest of our mutual affections, after that the breath of life has been infused into them. Altogether we hold this chapter to be a singularly valuable document—as proving how capable the usages of a Christian church are of being amalgamated with the graces, and the amenities, and the complimentary expressions of the every-day intercourse that takes place in general society.

Ver. 1, 2. 'I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.' And here too we are presented with another most useful indication—the employment of female agency, under the eye and with the sanction of an apostle, in the business of a church. It is well to have inspired authority for a practice too little known and too little proceeded on in modern times. Phebe belonged to the order of deaconesses—in which capacity she had been the helper of many, including Paul himself. In what respect she served them is not particularly specified. Like the women in the Gospels[1] who waited upon our Saviour, she may have ministered to them of her substance—though there can be little doubt, that as the holder of an official station in the church, she ministered to them of her services also. They to whom she was commended by Paul were to receive her as becometh saints, or with all that respect and delicacy which were due to a Christian female; and also to render her all that assistance which her business, not here specified, might require at their hands.

Ver. 3, 4. 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.' Aquila and Priscilla must at this time have been at Rome. They had formerly been at Corinth,

[1] Luke, viii, 2, 3.

where Paul was their guest, and then at Ephesus, whither they accompanied Paul, and where he left them[1]—to which place they afterwards returned, if we may conclude from the salutation sent to them from Rome by Paul, in his letter to Timothy,[2] when he was bishop of the Ephesians. Both at Corinth and Ephesus they had been the helpers of Paul in Christ Jesus—his helpers, we presume, chiefly in things temporal—at least not in spiritual things, as they had been to Apollos, when they expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. Our great apostle did not require this at their hands—yet may they have been of most important use to him even as the ministers of holy things, in refreshing and confirming the souls of his disciples. And here it should be remarked, that Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, is joined to him in this work, seeing they are both represented in the book of Acts as contributing to the further instruction of Apollos, even after that he had signalised himself by his might in the Scriptures, and his eloquence in speaking the things of the Lord. Much more then might she be qualified to officiate as a teacher of her own sex, and more particularly of children. We cannot think then that the service of females in the Christian church was restricted to the mere office of deaconesses, who ministered to the sick and the destitute. They also laboured in a higher vocation; and should be employed still in the business of a parish, as most invaluable auxiliaries in dispensing both religious comfort and religious instruction, within such spheres as might with all fitness and

[1] Acts, xviii, 18, 19. [2] 2 Tim. iv, 19.

propriety be assigned to them. In particular, they will be found the most efficient of all civilisers among the families of a now outlandish, because heretofore neglected population—and this whether as the visitors of sewing and reading, or as themselves the teachers of Sabbath-schools—Or in the former capacity as the patronesses of week-day and common, and in the latter the direct agents of Christian education.

It appears that Aquila and Priscilla had exposed their own lives to jeopardy for the safety of Paul's. The special occasion on which this took place is not certainly known. There is abundant evidence of their having both had a will to have braved this hazard at any time for the sake of their beloved apostle. And we can be at no loss to imagine a way in which this might have been brought to the proof, when we read of the insurrection at Corinth against Paul,[1] where Aquila and Priscilla both were; and whence they accompanied him to Ephesus, where they probably were also, at the time when such a fearful outbreak was made upon him in that city by a riotous and enraged multitude. Whatever the occasion was on which they thus signalised themselves, it must have been some signal deliverance or service to Paul of which they were the instruments, that called forth so memorable an expression of gratitude, not alone from Paul individually, but probably and with open manifestation from all the churches.

Ver. 5–15. 'Likewise greet the church that is in their house.' It would appear from this, that in

[1] Acts, xviii, 12-18.

these days, Christian congregations met and had their religious services done to them in dwelling-houses. It was the practice for Aquila and Priscilla to have a church in their house elsewhere too —as here in Rome, and also in Asia, whence Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, and sends the church there a salutation from the church held in the house of these devoted followers of our Lord.[1] We have traces of the same practice in other places of the New Testament. "Salute Nymphas and the church which is in his house."[2] "Paul unto Philemon, and to the church in thy house."[3]

Then follows a list of salutations, in the course of which some brief notices are given as if casually and incidentally, yet which are by no means devoid of interest.

As when he salutes Epenetus, he signalises him by an epithet—*well*-beloved—which marks him out as an object of the apostle's special and superlative affection. It is like the love which one has for a first-born—he having been the first of Paul's spiritual children in Achaia. It is true that the house of Stephanas is elsewhere termed the first-fruits of Achaia.[4] It is possible that Epenetus may have been of the household of Stephanas, or at all events may have been converted at the same time, or time of the first conversion which took place in Achaia under Paul's ministry. Some critics find an explanation in the circumstance that there are Greek manuscripts which present us with "Asia," instead of Achaia.

[1] 1 Corinthians, xvi, 19. [2] Colossians, iv, 15.
[3] Philemon, 1, 2. [4] 1 Corinthians, xvi, 15.

We also gather from this enumeration additional evidence for the agency of females in these days—as of Mary, who bestowed much labour—as well as Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured; and Persis, who laboured much in the Lord. This may have been the labour of mere deaconship—as that of Stephanas was at the time when he was the bearer of a supply for the apostle's wants, and of whose family it is said that they addicted themselves to the ministry[1] of the saints. It may however have been more than this—a ministration in spiritual as well as temporal good things. The passage before us scarcely allows of any specific determination on this point. To labour *in the Lord* gives no decision. To assist the disciples of Christ in things necessary for the present life is part of that labour in the Lord which shall not be in vain. "In as much as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We may here add, that in the 6th verse there occurs a variation of reading—some manuscripts bearing that Mary bestowed much labour 'among you,' instead of 'on us.' That is, she may have been helpful to the members of the church, whether spiritually or temporally; or in the latter of these two senses, may have been helpful to Paul himself.

Ver. 7. We have no taste for ascertaining that which the Bible has left uncertain, and on which ecclesiastical antiquity throws no light whatever. Why supersaturate the world with conjectures on matters which have no ground of evidence to stand upon?—as whether Andronicus and Junia were

[1] Διακονια.

man and wife; whether Junia was not Julia, or if she was a woman at all; whether they were claimed by Paul as of kin to himself, because Israelites, or because of still nearer affinity; whether they were of note among the apostles, because, being converted before Paul, they might have been of the seventy disciples; and lastly, what the occasion of their imprisonment along with the apostle. Enough for us the generalities of Scripture, which are at the same time of themselves sufficiently interesting.

Ver. 8. 'Beloved in the Lord.' This expression denotes a purely spiritual relationship, as distinguished from the natural relationship adverted to in the preceding verse. The two verses together suggest the two distinct grounds on which one might be the object of affection. Both might be united in the same person; and this reminds us of what Paul says respecting Onesimus, that he should be received by Philemon as a brother beloved, "both in the flesh and in the Lord." It is pleasing to observe the former of these two affections thus legitimised by the apostle—or the sanction given by him to the natural as well as spiritual love—to the love of friendship and relationship, as well as that love of Christians which is emphatically termed the love of the brethren, and is singled out by St. John as an evidence of our having passed from death unto life.

Ver. 9. 'Our helper in Christ.' This expression, even in our English Bible, powerfully suggests that the help given by Urbane to Paul was in his apostolic work. But the original fixes this more surely. He was the fellow-worker[1] of the apostle.

[1] Συνεργος.

Ver. 10. 'Approved in Christ'—or found. He was one of those whom Paul here distinguishes by the special proof which he had given of his discipleship.

Ver. 11. 'Which are in the Lord.' This adjunct to the household of Narcissus, and not of Aristobulus, would imply that only a part of Narcissus' family had been converted—whereas all of the other household had been turned to the faith. We may here observe, that Paul confines these salutations only to brethren in Christ—though none more courteous than he to them who were without. His were not common letters, but written for the use of the churches.

Ver. 13. 'Chosen in the Lord.' Elect—it is not said beloved, as with many of the others. The two expressions harmonise. They who are loved now were loved before the foundation of the world. They who were loved then, are loved even unto the end.

'His mother and mine.' The mother of Rufus by birth, of Paul by affection—a claim of relationship by which he delicately and beautifully propounds the love that he bore to her. Rufus is understood to have been the son of Simon, who was compelled to bear the cross of our Saviour.[1] We may close these remarks, by observing that these names are not without their use—in clearing up certain points, or at least furnishing ground for certain plausible conjectures, both in the evangelic and in ecclesiastical history. As an example of the latter, there is no reason for doubting the testimony of the ancients—that the Hermas to whom Paul here sends his respects, is identical with the

[1] Mark, xv, 21.

apostolic father of that name, whose works have come down to us. For specimens of the help which these names afford, in establishing certain connections and references—so as to harmonise some of the distant places and passages of the New Testament, and thus elicit a confirmatory evidence for the truth of the evangelic story, see Dr. Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ.'

Ver. 16. 'Salute one another with an holy kiss.' —The customary method of salutation in these days—exchanged, however, only between those of the same sex. It is remarkable that, by the testimony of Suetonius, an edict was published by one of the Roman emperors for the abolition of this practice among his subjects—perhaps in order to check abuses, for the prevention of which our apostle enjoins that it shall be a holy salutation. It is a custom adverted to in other places of the New Testament.[1]

'The churches of Christ salute you'—Those churches probably to whom he had made known his purpose of writing to the church at Rome—whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.[2] We might well imagine the satisfaction which would be spread abroad among the disciples everywhere, when they heard of the progress which Christianity was making in the metropolis of the empire; and with what cordiality they would send their gratulations to all believers there.

Ver. 17. 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary

[1] 1 Cor. xvi, 20; 2 Cor. xiii, 12; 1 Thessalonians, v, 26; 1 Peter, v, 14. [2] Romans, i, 8.

to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.' Paul recurs to the topic of his unceasing earnestness and desire—the peace or unanimity of the church. He had just finished a long series of salutations, and enjoined them to exchange these tokens of mutual affection with each other—when, as if the more strikingly to mark his adverse feeling towards the authors and promoters of dissension in their society, he points them out as men, with whom, instead of the signs or interchanges of regard, they were to hold no fellowship. He who before had told them whom they were to receive, now tells them whom they are to reject or 'avoid.' The doctrine which they had just learned from him was that of forbearance, one for another, in the matter of certain Jewish observances—the doctrine of that charity which endureth all things, save that spirit which is hostile to its own, and wherewith it must ever be at antipodes. For them who caused divisions, such as the judaising teachers who would have forced their own burdensome ritual on all the converts; or for them who caused offences, such as those Gentile believers, who, in the wantonness of their liberty, cared not to insult and to wound the consciences of their weaker brethren—for neither of these could our apostle feel the slightest complacency or toleration. They were marked men in his estimation—notorious in the sinister sense of the term. And it strongly evinces the value that he had for unbroken concord in every Christian society—when, in point both of reckoning and treatment, he puts these disturbers of the peace on the same level with those profligates whom

he would cast out from the attentions of all the brethren.[1]

Ver. 18. 'For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' He obviously refers here to the judaising teachers—because to them who deceived the hearts of the simple, that is, of the scrupulous or weak, who refrained from meats, and attached a religious importance to the eating of herbs.[2] There were false teachers in these days, to whose inroads the earlier churches stood peculiarly exposed. They practised on those of a tender conscience, making a trade as it were of their superstitious fears; and made unhallowed use of the ill-gotten ascendancy which they obtained over them. Their object, as the apostle here tells us, was not to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but to make out a lazy and luxurious livelihood for themselves—and that at the expence of those, whom by good words and fair speeches they had deceived. No wonder that the noble, manly, disinterested Paul, and withal so jealous as he was for the maintenance of the pure truth of the gospel, should, on so many occasions, have protested with such vigour and vehemence against them. It is of such that he seems to speak in Philippians, iii, 18, 19, where he denounces the enemies of the cross of Christ, "whose god is their belly;" and in Gal. vi, 12—where he tells of those who "desire to make a fair show." They were the troublers of whom he desired that they should even be cut off[3]—the perverters of the gospel of Christ,

[1] See 1 Cor. v, 11. [2] Romans, xiv, 2. [3] Gal. v, 12.

who preached another gospel, and whom he pronounces to be accursed.[1] These deceivers were specially of the circumcision, who subverted whole houses, and taught things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.[2] We can quite imagine them to be of that sort who entered into houses and led captive silly women.[3] Our knowledge of such characters and such doings furnishes a clue to the explanation of other passages. They were of such impostors that Peter speaks, and who seem to have taken a most shameful advantage over their dupes or victims—"beguiling unstable souls"—given to "covetous practices"—"sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while feasting" with the deceived—and "speaking great swelling words of vanity."[4] And so also Jude, in exhorting the disciples to whom he wrote, that "they should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," describes to us the men against whom that contest had to be maintained—"men crept in unawares," and "who run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward"—who having insinuated themselves into the society of the faithful, feasted among them without fear—who with their mouths spake great swelling words, and flattered men for their own advantage.[5]

Ver. 19. 'For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.' What he had before said of their faith, he now says of their obe-

[1] Gal. i, 7, 8. [2] Titus, i, 10, 11. [3] 2 Tim. iii, 6.
[4] 2 Peter, ii, 13, 14, 18, 19. [5] Jude, 4, 11, 12, 16.

dience, that it was spoken of everywhere. He is anxious therefore that they should not tarnish their fair fame—for certain it is that from the ready and general intercourse which subsisted between Rome and all parts of the empire, the story of their degeneracies would as speedily go abroad as did that of the virtues and graces by which they adorned their profession of the gospel. He rejoices in the praise which they had earned from all the churches; but proportional would be his grief should they ever forfeit the reputation which they had acquired. He does not express, however, the same doubt or diffidence of them which he did of the Galatians—yet for their greater security he cautions them to be 'wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.'

This last injunction is analogous to that given by our Saviour to those disciples whom he sent forth as "lambs in the midst of wolves." "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." But though analogous, it does not seem to be identical. The apostles of our Lord needed the wisdom of the serpent for their protection from the wiles of their skilful and practised adversaries, who knew, for they had made a study of it, how best to circumvent and distress their victims. And they were harmless as doves, because they neither felt the disposition, nor had ever cultivated the art of malice. It is thus that men might be wise in one thing and simple in another; and the application of these qualities to the case before us seems to have lain—First in ability to discriminate what was really and essentially good from that which but claimed or

pretended to be so, in virtue of which they cleaved to the one and rejected the other—Secondly in abstaining from all fellowship, and so having no knowledge of their ways, with those deep and mischievous designers who could so sophisticate and so counterfeit evil as to make it pass for that which was good—imposing on their deluded followers, by a show of will-worship and zeal for the law, to the utter subversion of the gospel of Christ. By the first they were men in understanding—proving all things, and holding fast that which is good.[1] By the second they were children in malice—strangers to its wishes, and therefore unskilled in its methods or its ways.

Ver. 20. 'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' A good many manuscripts, and even a warrantable translation of the received reading, would authorise our turning this clause from a prophecy into a prayer—'May the God of peace bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' The reference by the apostle to the great adversary of human souls was very naturally suggested by the view he was then taking of those false teachers, whom he elsewhere designates as the ministers of Satan transformed into angels of light. And the terms in which the prayer or prophecy is couched, is precisely such as would be suggested by the prediction in Genesis, iii, 15, "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." He is the great author of all confusion and controversy in our churches: And the achievement proper to the God of peace, or to His Son, who came to destroy

[1] 1 Thessalonians, v, 21.

the works of the devil, would be to trample them under foot, and so evolve harmony and order out of all the disturbances by which he retards, though unable to prevent, the final establishment of the triumph of Christ over all His enemies. The invocation for His grace to be with them comes in most appropriately—seeing that this is indeed the great instrument of Satan's overthrow—the Spirit who is at the giving of Christ, being the alone victor over the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience—the spirit of him who is the god of this world. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

It is not unworthy of notice that this Epistle to the Romans seems to have had three distinct conclusions. The first is at the end of the 15th chapter, where the last verse is quite in the form of a valedictory invocation; but, just as if before the letter had been sent off, there had occurred time enough for the subjoining of something more, we find the apostle adding the salutations of the 16th chapter, from the first to the sixteenth verse. As he had recurred to the letter for the purpose of sending these salutations, he is revisited while in the act of penning or rather of dictating them, with that desirousness which he felt so strongly for the peace of the church at Rome: And this occasions a prolongation of the letter from the 16th to the 20th verse, which he concludes with a second farewell salutation—'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.' After this, and with the benefit of a further allowance of time ere the messenger was despatched, there seems to be

a second postscript of more salutations which occupy three verses, from the 20th to the 24th—where a third valedictory, the last of all, concludes the epistle.

Ver. 21–23. Here follow the salutations, not from Paul himself to the individuals whom he names—these he had finished already; nor yet from the churches at large, which also had been given; but from certain Christian friends who were with him, and were desirous of sending through him their respects to the whole church at Rome.

In the 21st verse, there occur two remarkable scriptural names—Timothy, who by the consent of all is he to whom he addressed the two epistles; and Lucius, who though regarded by some as Lucius of Cyrene, is, by far the greater number of critics, and with more probability, reckoned to be Luke the Evangelist, author of the Gospel and Acts, and the fellow-traveller of Paul. We leave the question undecided, whether the kinsmen here mentioned were nearer relatives, or only Israelites, whom the apostle elsewhere calls his kinsmen according to the flesh.

In the 22nd verse Paul suspends his dictation, and lets his own amanuensis interpose a salutation from himself to the church at Rome. In his first epistle to the Corinthians he also suspends his dictation; and, taking up the pen himself, writes—"The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand."

'Gaius mine host, and of the whole church,' mentioned in the 23rd verse, is with good reason conceived to be the Gaius of Corinth whom Paul had baptized;[1] from which city this epistle was

[1] 1 Corinthians, i, 14.

written. Paul was at that time an inmate of his house; and he takes occasion to make honourable mention of his hospitality to Christians at large—a frequent and most useful virtue, being much called for by the exigencies of the times. Erastus the chamberlain, or city treasurer of Corinth, is an example, that though not many of wealth or high station, yet that some such had become obedient to the faith. As we have just stated that this epistle was written from Corinth, we might give a specimen of the way in which this is reasoned out—or of the kind of data on which such a conclusion is supported.—Paul commends Phebe, who seems to have been sent with the epistle, to the church at Rome. She was a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, and a few miles distant from it. Then Gaius is the host of Paul;[1] and Gaius was baptized by Paul at Corinth.[2] Then Erastus is chamberlain of the city, which he does not name. It must have been a well-known city therefore; and in all likelihood this capital of Achaia. Lastly, Erastus, we are told in 2 Tim. iv, 20, abode at Corinth—though probably often absent from it, as to all appearance he was a fellow-helper of Paul, and at times accompanied him in his travels.[3]

Ver. 24–27. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest,

[1] Rom. xvi, 23. [2] 1 Cor. i, 14. [3] Acts, xix, 22.

and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.' The final benediction of Paul comes at last, and closes the epistle. It begins with a repetition of the same which he had already given in the 20th verse—imploring upon them all the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. What remains is in the general an ascription of glory to the Father of our Lord—but it is of such a complicated and parenthetic structure, as to require some attention for unravelling the several topics which are involved in it.

'To him that is of power to stablish you.' This clause is suspended in Paul's own frequent and characteristic way, by the interposal of other matter suggested at the time; and which if removed would connect immediately the words now given with those of the 27th verse. 'To him that is of power to stablish you.....to God only wise,' &c. The contiguity only, not the connection, of these two clauses, is broken up, by what comes between them. 'To him that is of power;' or as Jude says in his closing benediction—"To him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless." To establish a man in the faith is to make him stand fast therein—so as that he shall not fall, or "fall away."[1] It is well thus to connect our perseverance with the power of God. He who hath begun the good work, can alone confirm and perfect it. It is by a perpetual reference therefore,

[1] Hebrews, vi, 6.

in prayer to Him, and for the strengthening influences of His Spirit, that grace is alimented in the heart. Let him who thinketh he standeth, thus take heed lest he fall. Let him work out his salvation with fear and trembling, because sensible of his own weakness, and so having no confidence in himself. Yet let him mix with his trembling mirth—because rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, and looking upward to that God who alone worketh in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

'According to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.' May He stablish you in the truths and principles of that system which is agreeable to, so agreeable as to be identical with my gospel or with the gospel which I preach, and which Christ also preached—Paul thus affirming his doctrine and Jesus Christ's doctrine to be at one.

'According to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began,' or kept secret in ancient times.[1] He had before said —according to 'my gospel;' and when he now says—according to 'the revelation of the mystery,' he but substitutes one method of expression for another—The subject-matter in both being the same, only amplified or expressed otherwise. This gospel was 'kept secret,' or held back in silence from the earth[2]—there having been little or nothing said of it to the earlier generations of our species.—It has been made a matter of discussion what the mystery here spoken of precisely is. Some would have it specifically to be the calling of the Gentiles, and for countenance to this their explanation of it,

[1] Χρόνοις αἰωνίοις. [2] Σεσιγημένου.

would refer to Ephesians, iii, 9, and Colossians, i, 26. We have no doubt ourselves, that generally it is the subject-matter of the gospel.

'But now is made manifest.' That which was profoundly hidden before is now made manifest—first in a dimmer and lesser degree by the prophets to the Jews; and afterwards in the fuller light of gospel times made known to all nations. We are not to wonder that the revelation made to the prophets should be spoken of as only made now. At the time when this revelation was first given its meaning was little known even to the prophets through whom it passed. Though ministered by them it was not unto themselves but unto us.[1] It had been given in words to the world centuries before the appearance of our Saviour—yet was only made known for the first time to the disciples of Emmaus, when He opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures—beginning with Moses and the Prophets. What our Saviour did in person to these disciples upon earth, He afterwards did to believers in general by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and whose office it is to make the sure word of prophecy obvious to their view, by causing the day to dawn and the day-star to arise in their hearts. The gospel might well have been said by the apostle to be manifest by the scriptures of the prophets only now—for only now were these scriptures made manifest.

'According to the commandment of the everlasting God made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith.' To perfect the revelation of the gospel, the work of apostles had to be superadded

[1] 1 Peter, i, 12.

to that of prophets. The gospel had been witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets—when it lay in enigma till cleared up by the more explicit statements of those who were commissioned to go and preach it unto every creature.

These three verses (25, 26, and 27) might be rendered thus.—'Now to Him who is able to establish you in the discipleship of my gospel, which is nothing else than the gospel of Jesus Christ Himself — or in the discipleship of that revelation whereby there has been divulged the truth that was before hidden, and kept back from men in the earlier ages of the world; but is now made manifest, both by the prophetic writings which we in these days have been made more fully to understand—and also by the proclamation of the same agreeably to the commandment of the everlasting God, amongst all nations, for the purpose of obtaining their submission to the faith—To Him, the only wise God, be glory for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

We may be assured that there is nothing misplaced or inappropriate in the epithets employed by the apostle; and more especially in those which he applies to the Divinity. In particular, when he applies different epithets to Him at different times, there must, we apprehend, be a discriminative reason for his so doing. In the 26th verse he denominates Him the everlasting God; and in the 27th, the God only wise. The epithet everlasting seems to have been suggested to the mind of the apostle, when he had in view the different and distant ages at which God had His different dealings with men

from the beginning of the world—as keeping them in ignorance at its earlier periods, and at length in due time making known the scheme of His salvation. He, the King Eternal, who knows the end from the beginning, knows what is best and fittest to be done at each of the successive stages in the process of that great administration whose goings forth have been of old, and whose issues are from everlasting to everlasting. And He is denominated the only wise, that we, the short-lived creatures of a day, might learn to receive with unquestioning silence all the intimations which He has been pleased to have given us. In particular, it should reconcile the Jews to the termination of that economy under which they had hitherto lived, and under which they had vainly arrogated to themselves an exclusive and ever-during superiority over the rest of the species—whereas it appeared that the middle wall of partition was now to be broken down; and that their fancied monopoly of the Divine favour was but a temporary evolution in the history of the Divine government. And so he concludes his epistle, by calling on both parties in the church to which he writes it, to unite with him in the one ascription of glory to the Father through the Son; and that verily a glory which shall never end.

THE END.

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Government of Maharashtra
on 10 February, 2016